

Prayer

Its significance and benefits

AFZAL UR RAHMAN

CONTENTS

	Page
Sponsor's Note	
Preface	
<i>SECTION ONE</i> Introduction	1
Chapter 1	1
(a) Meaning	5
(b) Importance	8
Compulsory Duty	8
(a) Adam, Noah etc.	9
(b) Ibrahim's descendants	9
(c) Prophet Shuaib	10
(d) Prophet Musa	10
(e) Prophet Zacharia	10
(f) Maryam	10
(g) Prophet Jesus	10
(h) Quality of Believers	10-11
(i) Last Prophet	11
Loss of Prayer	11
Chapter 2	16
Actual Performance	16
Straightening the Rows	22
Ruku and Sujud	23
Tashahhud	23
Excellence of Congregation	24
Timings of Prayer	24
Wisdom of timings	27
Contents of Prayer	29
Adhan and Takbir	30

Facing the Ka'ba and Tasbih	31
Surah Fateha	31
Worship (Ruku and Sujud)	34
Tashahhud	36

SECTION TWO Physical Benefits 39

Chapter 1	41
Physical Cleanliness ✓	41
Wudu	44
Cleaning of Nose	44
Cleaning of Teeth	45
Bathing	45
Friday Bath	47
Clothes	48
Taharat	49

SECTION THREE

→ Significance of Postures ✓	55
------------------------------	----

SECTION FOUR Individual Benefits ✓

Chapter 1	75
Strengthens Faith	75
Punctuality	78
Sense of Duty	79
Self-Discipline	82
Character-Building	86
Chapter 2	92
Self-Control	92
Patience	94
Efficiency	109
Refinement	110
Excellence	111

Humility	113
Thanksgiving	115
Obedience	118
Contentment	120
Real Success	125
God's Blessing	128

SECTION FIVE Social Benefits ✓ 135

Chapter 1	135
Introduction	135
Social Organisation	140
Community Centre	143
Mutual Help	145
Chapter 2	147
Equality and Brotherhood	148
Spirit of Jihad	149
Respect for other's Rights	154
Tolerance	154
Unity	155
Love and Affection	159

SECTION SIX Moral Benefits ✓ 163

Chapter 1	165
Introduction	165
Guards Against Evil	169
Chapter 2	181
Goodness and Piety	181
Honesty	185
Sincerity	191

SECTION SEVEN Spiritual Benefits 199

Chapter 1	201
Introduction	201

Chapter 2	213
Dhikr Allah	213
Chapter 3	233
Fear of God	233
Love of God	236
Piety (Taqwa)	238
Chapter 4	250
Tazkiya (purification)	250
Khushu and Khudu	257
Chapter 5	270
Communion with God	270
Chapter 6	290
Itminan (tranquillity)	290
 SECTION EIGHT Summary	 296
Chapter 1	298
The Last Word	298
Blessing of Prayer	299

SPONSOR'S NOTE

It is a matter of great pleasure for the Muslim Schools Trust to sponsor and present this valuable and useful book to the public.

Salat is the most important pillar of the Islamic faith. It brings to light the significance of the relationship of man to his Creator and of man to man. This book has rightly emphasised and explained the multifarious aspects of *salat*: physical, moral, personal, social, material, spiritual. It strikes a rational and logical balance between the individual and social, spiritual and temporal.

We hope the readers will greatly benefit from the all-embracing and comprehensive nature of the prayer which this book has endeavoured to explain.

SALEM AZZAM

30 June, 1979

Secretary-General
Muslim Schools Trust
London

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The present book was first published under the title 'Utility of Prayer' in 1974. Since then I constantly had the feeling that many important aspects of the prayer have been left untouched or dealt with only in a passing manner. Similarly arrangement and presentation also needed improvement.

In the present edition the title of the book has been changed to 'Prayer, its Significance and Benefits'. It is more appropriate and sums up the theme of the book succinctly. The readers will find much fresh material in the present edition. The older material has been rewritten, and rearranged in a fresh order. It is hoped that the readers will find it of greater value and interest, and it will be able to meet - at least - some of their demands. A particular emphasis has been given to bring out the spiritual and moral aspects of the prayer in Islam. Special attention has also been paid to the demands of those who want to develop close relationship with God and open up creative dialogue with Him through reflective and meaningful *munajat* in prayer.

Afzal-ur-Rahman

London

22 June, 1979

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

I

MEANING

Salat means prayer, worship; to invoke God in prayer; to invite the blessing of God; it also means intercession; benediction; the blessing or Grace of God. In lexicograpy (علم اللغة) the word *salat* is used for attending to something or paying attention to someone. From this it came to be used for *ruku*, the glorification, exaltation, supplication, entreating or invocation of God in prayer. According to Maulana Hamid ud din Farrahi, the word *salat* has been used for worship and prayer (*Ibadah*) since ancient times. In the Kaldani language it means prayer and supplication, while in Hebrew it is used for *Raka* and worship. But in *Qur'anic* terminology it means the prayer ritual, five times a day. (1)

Prayer is a form of worship. It is an outward expression of a believer's faith in God. It is practical sign of obedience to the Command of God. We worship and obey our Lord, Who is the Creator and the Sovereign. He is the Author of all existence. He has created all the worlds in the Universe. He also provides sustenance and means of nourishment to the whole of His Creation by which it continues to grow and move towards its goal of perfection. It is through worship and obedience (*Ibadah*) of God that man can attain real greatness and perfection. God has Himself taught man to attain the highest position of honour through prayer and through seeking His help: "Thee do we worship, and Thine help do we seek" (1:5). Prophet Ibrahim was shown the wonderful works of God's Creation in the form of the stars, the moon and the sun. With the Mercy and Guidance of God, he was not deceived by

1. Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, vol.1.p.49.

these forms of His Creation, but turned his face to the Almighty, the Creator of the universe: " Surely I have turned myself firmly and truly, wholly to Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to God." (6:80) And our Lord commands us to worship and obey Him because He is the Creator and the Sustainer of the entire universe: " Surely your Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and He is established on the Throne of Authority, regulating and governing all things. There is no intercession except after His permission. This is God, your Lord, therefore serve Him." (10:3). In this verse, we are clearly told to worship and obey God alone and none else because He is the Creator and the Maintainer of all the worlds.

The Arabic word *Rab* stands for (a) Lord or Sustainer; (b) Master and Owner and (c) Sovereign and Ruler. God is the Lord and Guardian of the universe in all these ways. The word *Rab* thus conveys the idea of Lordship, Mastership and Kingship. God is the Sole Lord, Master and Sovereign of the whole creation. His Creatures must worship His Lordship, show humility and servitude to His Mastership and complete obedience to His undisputed sovereignty. The Arabic word *Ibadah* also conveys three separate meanings: (a) worship and devotion; (b) humility and servitude and (c) obedience and submission. And in the above mentioned verse, it is used to convey all three meanings: that human beings are worshippers of God and also His slaves and His subjects; and that they maintain these relations with God and God alone. They worship and obey none but God. God is the Sole Lord and Sustainer of the universe. It is, therefore, our duty to be grateful to Him and obey Him with complete devotion and love. God is the Sole Master and Owner of the entire universe. We should, therefore, offer Him complete servility in all humility. God is also the

Sole Sovereign and Ruler of the universe. He demands complete submission and obedience from His subjects. They must not obey any one other than the Omnipotent Ruler.

Daily prayer is offered in response to the Command of God. It therefore, reflects complete submission and obedience on the part of man to his Sovereign, Master and Lord. Another verse of the *Holy Qur'an* further explains the meaning of *Ibadah* in these words: " On the other side, there is another type of man who devotes his whole life to pleasing God and God is Gracious to such of His servants." (2:207) This man is sincere in his devotion to God. He obeys every Command without question. This is true *Ibadah* and complete submission to the will of God. We all are advised in the following verse to follow this type of man: " O you who believe; enter into Islam wholly, and follow not the footsteps of satan. Surely he is your open enemy." (2:208)

Here man's " turning towards God, in intimate communion, reverence, the spirit of devotion and humble submission, is termed *Ibadah*." *Ibadah*, in fact, means complete submission to the will of God. A believer must submit his entire life to the code set by the *Holy Qur'an*. He must enter the fold of Islam with his whole self without any reservation because Islam embraces life in its totality.

You must come into the fold of Islam with your whole self." Your thoughts, your theories, your culture, your sciences, your manners, your dealings, your efforts etc., should, in every aspect of life, be subordinated to Islam. You should not divide your life into different compartments so as to follow Islam in one and discard it in the other." (2)

2. Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an* Vol. 1. p. 54

This is further explained in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "Whoever surrenders himself to God in obedience he shall get his reward from his Lord." (2:112) The whole mankind is commanded in the following words to submit themselves in obedience (*Ibadah*) to their Lord: "O mankind; submit to your Lord Who created you and those before you." (2:21) The word *silm* means peace as well as submission without reservation. A believer enjoys the benefit of peace and security after complete submission to his Lord and so does the community, but only after total obedience to the will of God.

"A true believer always keeps up daily prayer for it is the practical proof and permanent test of the sincerity of one's faith. Therefore, after one's profession of Islam, as soon as a Muslim hears the call for prayer (which sounds regularly five times daily from every mosque in the Muslim world), he should join the congregation in prayer, for this decides whether he is sincere in his profession of faith or not. If he does not attend to the call and does not join the congregation, it is an indication that he is not sincere in his profession." (2)

IMPORTANCE

The institution of prayer is one of the basic and most important pillars of Islam. It is a pillar without which the social system of Islam cannot be established on a sound footing. The *Holy Qur'an* has, therefore, emphasised its importance time and again. Laziness and sluggishness in its performance is a sign of hypocrisy. (4:142). and abstention from it is a sign of disbelief. (107:4-5).

The following verse of the *Holy Qur'an* compares such people with those who ascribe partners to God: "Establish regular prayer, and be not among those who join partners with God." (30:30). This verse makes it clear firstly that prayer is the second most important duty of a Muslim after faith and belief in the Unity of God, and secondly that abstention from prayer is likely to lead man into disbelief, for so long as he does not strengthen his state of mind with outward deeds, there is every likelihood of the loss of that state. This is why the Holy Messenger of God always enjoined prayer upon his companions and warned them of the danger of disbelief and apostasy through its neglect or abstention from it (74:41-43).

The Holy Messenger once said that prayer was the pillar of religion. Just as a building falls when its pillars fall, similarly godliness and piety vanish with the loss of prayer. And he is also reported to have said that the first thing about which man would be questioned on the day of judgment was prayer. If it was considered right, the rest of his deeds would be right, and if it was wrong, all his other deeds would be wrong. When the Holy Messenger was about to die, the last thing he bequeathed to his followers was the safeguarding of the institution of prayer.

Prayer is so important in Islam that it cannot be neglected or abandoned even when facing the enemy. This is because the chief objective of a believer is not fighting but creating those conditions in society where every man can worship and obey God without fear. He may even forget his imminent danger from his enemy, when he receives a call from his Lord for prayer. He therefore, does not neglect his prayer even in the battlefield when his very life is in real danger. "When you go on a journey, there is no harm, if you shorten your prayer

(especially) when you fear that the disbelievers might harass you, for the disbelievers are openly bent upon enmity against you." "And when you, O Prophet, are among the Muslims and are going to lead them in prayer (of war), let a party of them stand behind you, carrying their weapons with them. When they have made their prostrations, they should fall back and let another party of them who have not yet offered prayer, say it with you and they, too, should be on their guard and keep their weapons with them. For the unbelievers are always on the look out for a chance to find you neglectful of your weapons and your baggage so that they may swoop down upon you with a surprise." (4:101-102)

"Prayer must be offered anyhow in any form as the circumstances or the occasion permit. If it is possible to offer prayer in congregation, it should be offered in congregation; otherwise one should say it individually. If it is not possible to turn the face to the '*qiblah*', it may be offered facing any other direction. If it is not possible to remain stationary for prayer, it may be offered while riding or walking. If it is not possible to bend down or prostrate, one should do so symbolically. If, during the prayer, it become necessary to move from that place, one may continue the prayer even during the movement. There is no harm in offering prayer even if one's clothes become stained with blood." (3)

The literal meaning of *salat* is to pray to God and to beg and ask Him earnestly and humbly for His Mercy and Blessing. And its real meaning is exactly the same as explained by the Holy Messenger himself in these words: "It is reported by Anas that the Holy Messenger once said that prayer was the core of *Ibadah*. According to Nauman bin Bashir An-3. Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an* Vol., II p.156.

sari, the Holy Messenger said that prayer was *Ibadah* and then in support of this he recited the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "And your Lord says: pray to Me, I will answer your (prayer). But those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell in humiliation." (11:60) It is also reported by Hakim that the Holy Messenger said that the best *Ibadah* was prayer (*dua*) and then recited the above-mentioned verse.

There is no doubt that, when man is faced with hardships and is surrounded by misfortunes, the only ray of hope and the only means of contentment for him is prayer: "The hearts of those who believe find rest in the remembrance of God; now surely in the remembrance of God hearts do find rest." (13:28) This is why believers are told to seek God's help in the hardships and worries of this world: "And seek assistance through patience and prayer." (11:45)

Prayer has always formed an essential part of the revealed religions of the world. All the Messengers of God, including the messengers from amongst Bani Israel, had strictly enjoined this on their followers. The Israelites were commanded to establish prayer in the Old Testament in these words: "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is Near." (IS.55:6) And a similar commandment is found in the New Testament: "Watch you therefore and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass." (LK.21:36) Learned scholars and philosophers have always recognised the great part played by prayer in the life of man. In the words of Macdonald, "God, Himself, the One, reveals Himself to man through the Prophets and otherwise, and man in prayer can come directly to God. This is Muhammad's great glory. The individual soul and its God are face to face.

The Holy Messenger was given the opportunity to see for himself some of the manifestations of the Glory of God on the night of *Miraj* (or Ascension). He experienced the great joy and contentment of communion with God on that night. There he was given the gift of prayer with the good news that if Muslims establish this institution in their society, they will enjoy the pleasure and satisfaction of being in the company of God. As the Holy Messenger put it, "Prayer is *miraj* for the believers." If Muslims earnestly establish prayer in their social system according to the Sunnah of the Messenger, they will truly experience the ecstasy and contentment of the company of God. "The real purpose of Islam in declaring that *Ibadah* embraces the total life of man is to make religious faith play a practical and effective role in reforming human life, in developing in man an attitude of dignified patience and fortitude in the face of hardships and difficulties and in creating in him the urge to strive for the prevalence of good and extirpation of evil." (4)

Prayer is a Compulsory Duty

Prayer is a duty enjoined by the *Holy Qur'an* on all Muslims. It has always been obligatory on all believers in all ages. All the Messengers before the Holy Prophet were commanded to establish the institution of prayer themselves and to ask their followers to do so:

(a) Adam, Noah and Ibrahim

Adam and his descendants, Noah and Ibrahim, were commanded to establish prayer in these words: "These are they on whom God bestowed favours, from among the Messengers, of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the seed

of Ibrahim and Israel....When the Messengers of the Beneficent were recited to them, they fell down in submission, weeping." (19:58)

(b) Messenger Ibrahim and his Descendants

Ibrahim settled his son Isma'il and his mother Hajar in Makkah and prayed for them in these words: "Our Lord; I have settled a part of my offspring in the valley without cultivation by the Sacred House; In order, O our Lord, that they may keep up prayer. ... " Our Lord, make me keep up prayer and from my (offspring) too. " (14:37,40) And Isma'il also kept up prayer and commanded his people to do so: "And mention Isma'il in the Book. Surely he was truthful in promise.... And he enjoined on his people prayer." (19:55) God blessed Ibrahim with another son, Ishaq, and a grandson Yakub (Jacob). They were chosen leaders of those people and were asked to establish prayer in the following words: "We made them leaders who guided (people) by our Command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer;" (21:73) God made a covenant with the children of Israel to the effect that they would obey and worship none but Him in these words: "Remember that We made a solemn covenant with the children of Israel: You shall serve none but God. And do good to your parents and keep up prayer." (11:83) And in Surah Al-Maidah: "And certainly God made a covenant with the children of Israel.... And God said: Surely I am with you, If you keep up prayer." (5:12) Prophet Luqman advised his son in these words: "O my son, keep up prayer and enjoin good and forbid evil." (31:17)

(c) Prophet Shuaib

Prophet Shuaib asked his people to obey and worship God in the following words: "And to Midian We sent their brother Shuaib. He said: O my people, worship God, you have no other deity but Him.(11:84).

(d) Prophet Musa

When Prophet Musa went to Mount Sinai, there he heard the voice of his Lord: "O Musa, surely I am thy Lord.... I am God, there is no deity but I, so worship Me, and keep up prayer for My remembrance." (20:12)

(e) Prophet Zacharia

Prophet Zacharia also maintained the institution of prayer. He was told by the angels while he was still praying, that his prayer was accepted by God: "So the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary." (3:38)

(f) Maryam (mother of Jesus)

When Maryam was chosen from amongst all the women of the world, she was commanded to obey God in these words: "O Maryam, worship your Lord devoutly and humble yourself and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down (in prayer)." (3:42)

(g) Prophet Jesus (Isa)

Prophet Jesus (Isa), likewise received similar commandment. Maryam was given the good news of the birth of Isa. She was told that he would be a Messenger of God and would perform many miracles with the Command of God. And that he would worship and obey his Lord: And when 'Isa spoke to the people in his childhood, he emphasised that he was a servant of God, Who had made him His Messenger in these words: "I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a Messenger... And He has enjoined on me prayer and *zakat* so long as I live." (19:30-31)

(h) Quality of Believers

The *Holy Qur'an* has described one of the Qualities of the believers, that they always establish and maintain the institution of prayer, in these words: "For believers are those whose hearts are full of fear and.... those who establish regular prayer." (8:2-3) And in Surah Al-Maidah: "And if God gives them political power in the world, they maintain regular prayer: "Those who, if We establish them in the world, observe regular prayer." (22:42)

It is the true quality of the believers that when they are given power on the earth, they do not become arrogant, disobedient and rebellious, but humble and God-fearing. They submit themselves willingly to the Command of God and establish regular prayer in their individual as well as their social system.

(i) Commandment of God to His Last Messenger

The *Holy Qur'an* has emphasised to Muhammed, the Messenger of Allah, time and again, the importance of regular prayer: "Tell My servants, who believe, to establish regular prayer." (14:31)

And finally, the eternal principle of Islam is clearly stated: "And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true in Faith, and to establish regular prayer." (98:5)

Loss of Prayer

When the believers discontinue the practice of prayer, they lose their excellence and goodness. The loss of prayer is the beginning of their end. It is the first step towards their political and economic downfall. The fact that the establishment of prayer was the chief factor in organising and

building up the broken and scattered power of the Israelites and other old nations is well-known. The *Holy Qur'an* has mentioned how, on many occasions, the nations gradually rose to power and excellence with the establishment of the institution of prayer, and how they went to ruin and oblivion after the break-up of this institution. "Then there has come after them an evil generation, who have neglected (and missed) prayer and followed after lusts; soon then, they will face destruction." (19:59)

It means that they either abstained from prayer or neglected and completely ignored it. This is the first step of every believing nation towards its downfall. prayer is the first and foremost link between a believer and God. It keeps alive his practical and close relationship, day and night, with God. It keeps him closer and nearer to godliness and does not let him break his active link. As soon as this link is broken, man goes further and further away from goodness and piety until his mental relationship with God completely breaks down.

Thereafter, he does not care for any of the value or good things of life but follows only his carnal self. He becomes a slave to his self. He follows every vain desire that pleases him. This is the unavoidable consequence of the breaking of his relationship with God. When one abstains from prayer, his heart loses its only link with God. As time passes, this gulf widens and man goes deeper and deeper into the depths of evil and lust.

Gradually he develops hostility to goodness and righteousness. He opposes everything that is good and right in this world. This obedience to his self becomes stronger until every aspect of his moral and social life becomes subservient to his self instead of to God. The above-quoted verse has stated a universal principle: that the degeneration of the

followers of all the former prophets began with the abandonment of prayer by them. When the guilty ones questioned on the Day of Judgement about their evil deeds which led to their downfall and degradation, they will admit their failure to keep up the institution of prayer: "And (ask) of the guilty: What has brought you to Hell? They will say: We were not of those who established prayer." (74:41-43)

They neglected or abstained from prayer and, consequently, followed the path of their own destruction in this world and in the Here-after. Abstention from prayer, in fact, means disobedience to the Command of God. And obviously one who does not obey the Command of God and is not prepared to follow the code of life set by the Messenger of God is not a true believer.

People who do not perform prayer properly but observe only the outward form of it are like those who do not perform it at all. They consider it a burden on them and come for it in a lazy way. Such people do not really perform prayer. The *Holy Qur'an* describes these people who merely observe the outward form of prayer and do not conform to its spirit in these words: "So woe to the worshippers, who are neglectful of their prayer." (107:4-5 and 9:54)." These verses show that worship does not consist merely of outward form, there is no doubt that outward form is an essential part and without it there cannot be any prayer. But it must be accompanied by an earnest desire to understand and follow the Command of God in word and in deed. Those believers who are not regular, or who do not observe the proper conditions of prayer, do not really perform it earnestly and sincerely in obedience to the Command of their Lord. They merely perform it to be seen by others so that they may be able to enjoy the economic and social benefits of the Muslim community. Therefore such people will not obtain the real and permanent

benefits of salat.

And in Surah Al-Nisa: "The hypocrites seek to deceive God, whereas, in fact, God has involved them in deception. When they rise up for prayer, they go reluctantly to it, merely to be seen by people and they remember God but little." (4:142) The offering of prayer in congregation has been held out as a test to whether one is a sincere believer or a hypocrite, because during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet one could not be considered a member of the Islamic community unless one offered prayer regularly and punctually. Just as every association or organisation considers the absence of a member without genuine excuse from its meetings as a sign of his lack of interest, and expels him from it for continuous absence, in the same way, a Muslim who absented himself from prayer in congregation was considered to give a clear sign of his lack of interest in Islam. And if continually absented himself from it, this was taken as a proof of his desertion from Islam. That is why even the confirmed hypocrites of that time had to join prayer in congregation five times a day, otherwise they would not have been counted as members of the Islamic Community.

But what distinguished the true believers from the hypocrites was that the believers went to the mosques with great enthusiasm before time and stayed there even after the prayer, which was clear proof of their genuine interest in it. On the other hand, the very call to prayer sounded like a death knell to a hypocrite. He would, however, rise up reluctantly to join the congregation, but the whole of his demeanour showed clearly that he was offering his prayer unwillingly. Then he would leave the mosque in haste as if he had been released from prison. All his movements showed that, in utter contrast to a true believer, he did not take any interest in the

remembrance of God, even during his hypocritical devotion." (5)

ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF PRAYER

In view of the great importance of the institution of prayer it is absolutely necessary that it must be performed properly in the same way as it was performed and taught by the Holy Messenger. It must be offered earnestly and humbly. The *Holy Qur'an* describes in a very short but significant way how prayer should be performed: "Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayer." (23:1-2).

The word *khashiah* means to show humility and make entreaties (before God). This state of a person has a very intimate relationship with his heart and the physical condition of his body. The *khashiah* of the heart is that man should be so impressed by the Grandeur and Majesty of God that he should feel a sense of terror and tremble with fear in His presence.

And the *khashiah* of the body is that when he goes before God, he should bow his head, humble himself, cast down his eyes and lower his voice. All signs of fear, humility and respect should appear on him. *Khashiah* in prayer, in fact, refers to the state of body and mind in complete humility. This is the essence of prayer. The Holy Messenger once saw a man playing with his beard while offering his prayer. He said "Had there been *khashiah* in his heart, it would have shown on his body."

The word used in the *Holy Qur'an* is *Iqam-as-salat*. *Iqam* means raising, lifting up, setting up, erection, establishment of an institution. It signifies

raising or erecting something in such a way that no curve or crookedness is left in it. The *Holy Qur'an* has asked believers to establish or set up prayer *Iqam-as-salat* and has not asked them to read prayer. The use of the word 'establish' (*Iqama*) for prayer is very significant and points to many other essential requirements of prayer.

First it refers to sincerity in prayer, that is, prayer is offered merely for God and to seek His pleasure. The requirement of erection (*Iqama*) cannot be fulfilled until prayer is performed with true conviction and full concentration of mind, for God alone, cutting out all other memories and feelings. This has been clarified in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "You should keep aright your direction during every act of worship and invoke Him alone, dedicating your faith sincerely and exclusively to Him." (7:29)

This also points to the fact that your face in prayer must be in the direction of *qibla* because it is the centre of *tawheed* (oneness) and sincerity. Secondly, it points to the real object of prayer, which is remembrance of God *dhikr* (ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ), with fear (*Khashiah*) and submission and humility (*Khudu*). If a man offers prayer unmindful of this, he is not establishing prayer but is carelessly mopping it up. The *Holy Qur'an* has pointed to this objective of the prayer: "It is I who am God; there is no God but Me: so worship Me and establish prayer to remember Me." (20:14 and 23:1-2)

Thirdly, prayer must be offered, without any alteration, in the manner God has commanded it to be performed and in which His Holy Prophet has shown it by his own action: "And when you have peace again remember God in that manner He has taught you, which you did not know before (2:239)." This includes straightening of rows and proper performance

of each part of prayer. This is why the Holy Prophet has said that 'straightening of rows is a part of establishing prayer' (*iqam-as-salat*). Nauman bin Bashir reported: the Messenger of God used to straighten our rows as if he were straightening an arrow with their help until he saw that we had learnt it from him. One day, when he saw a man whose chest was bulging out from the row, he said, "Servants of God, you must straighten your rows or God will create dissensions amongst you."

Fourthly, absolute adherence to the timings of the prayer; each prayer must be offered at the right time, as pointed out in the following verse of the *Qur'an*: "Establish prayer from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and be particular about the recital of the *Qur'an* at the dawn of the Morning." (17:78) This has been referred to on another occasion as the 'guarding' of prayers: "Take great care of your prayers, especially of a prayer that has excellent qualities of prayer, and stand before God like devoted servants." (2:238)

Fifthly, be steadfast in prayer and never abandon it "For the believers always remain steadfast to their prayer." (70:23).

Sixthly, observance of prayer in congregation. Prayer must always be offered in congregation. "It must be noted that the establishment of prayer (*iqam-us-salat*) is a very comprehensive term. It means that prayer should be performed in congregation and that permanent arrangements should be made for it in every habitation, otherwise prayer will not be considered as established even if every inhabitant of a place offers prayer individually." (1) This is pointed out in this verse of the *Qur'an*: "These are the people who, if We give them power

1. The Meaning of the *Qur'an* vol.1., p.54.

in the land, will establish prayer, pay the *zakat* dues, enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil" (22:41).

When prophet Ibrahim prayed, he mentioned the mission of his descendants in these words: "O our Lord; I have settled some of my descendants in a barren valley near your Sacred House, in order, O our Lord, that they may establish regular prayer. (14:37)."

Although *khashiah* is a condition of the heart, it automatically appears on the body as well. There are certain manners of prayer in the Shariah, (Law) which, on the one hand, assist *khashiah* of the heart and, on the other, keep the performance of prayer at the proper level, at least in the physical sense. Some of the important manners of prayer are given below:

1. Prayer must be performed with ease, comfort and calmness.
2. There must not be any movements of hands, head, eyes, or legs other than necessary in the performance of *ruku*, *sujud*, etc.
3. Every part of prayer must be performed properly and with quietness.
4. Until one part of prayer is completed, the other part must not be initiated.
5. Deliberate meditation on unrelated thoughts should be avoided.
6. One should constantly endeavour to understand the meaning of the words one is reciting in prayer.
7. Every prayer must be performed at its proper time, as emphasised in the *Holy Qur'an*: "prayer indeed has been enjoined on the believers at fixed times." (4:103) The words *Kitab mauqut* refer to the performance of each prayer at fixed times. The times of prayer were fixed by the Holy Messenger under Divine Guidance, and observance of each prayer at its proper time is an essential part of the performance of prayer itself.

The *Holy Qur'an* condemns people who are careless and do not perform their prayer properly: "So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their *salat*. " (107:4-5)

The word *sahun* is very comprehensive and includes all actions which are performed without having due regard for the institution of prayer. In fact, it refers to those people who neglect or ignore their prayer, or abstain from it, or perform it lazily and sluggishly without observing the necessary proprieties of prayer. They neither understand it nor show any interest in it and perform it without having any regard for its time. And usually such people perform their prayer at the last moment. The *Holy Qur'an* warns such worshippers and condemns this sort of prayer.

There are many *hadith* (traditions) of the Holy prophet which clearly show the right way and the wrong way of praying. "Abu Hurrarah said that a man entered the mosque, when God's Messenger was sitting in it, and prayed. He then came and said, "peace be upon you, and God's Messenger replied, "And upon you be peace. Go back and pray, for you have not prayed." He returned and prayed, then came and said, "Peace be upon you." And the Prophet replied, peace be upon you, Go back and pray, for you have not prayed." On the third or fourth occasion the man said, "Teach me, Messenger of God!" The Prophet replied, "When you get up to pray, Perform the ablution perfectly, then face the *qibla* and say *takbir*, 'Al-lahu Akbar;' then recite a convenient portion of the *Qur'an*, then bow and remain quietly in the position, then raise yourself and stand erect, then prostrate yourself and remain quietly in that position, then raise yourself quietly and sit quietly, then prostrate yourself and remain quietly in that position, then raise yourself and stand quietly, then do that throughout all

your prayer." (2)

"Aisha said that God's Messenger used to commence prayer with *takbir*. When he bowed, he neither kept his head up nor bent it down, but kept it between those extremes; when he raised his head after bowing, he did not prostrate himself till he had stood erect; when he raised head after prostration he did not prostrate himself again till he sat up." (3)

Rifa'a bin Rafi said that a man came and prayed in the mosque, after which he went and saluted the Prophet, who replied, "Repeat your prayer, for you have not prayed." The man asked the Prophet to teach him how to pray. The Prophet said, "When you face the *qibla* say *takbir*, then recite *Umm al Qur'an* and what God wishes you to recite; When you bow place the palms of your hands on your knees, bowing completely and stretching out your back; when you raise yourself straighten your spine and raise your head so as to adopt an erect position; when you prostrate yourself do it completely, when you raise yourself sit on your left thigh; do that every time you bow and prostrate yourself till you are at rest, having finished your prayer." (4)

"Narrated Anas Bin Malik: The Prophet said, "perform the bowing and prostrations properly. By God, I see you from behind my back when you bow or prostrate!" (5)

Similar traditions were also narrated by Jabir bin Samura and Al-Bara bin Azib. (6)

2. *Mishkat al Masabih*, English translation by Dr. James Robson, vol. 1. p. 159 (*Bukhari* and *Muslim* transmitted).

3. *Mishkat al Masabih*, p. 163.

4. *Bukhari*, English translation by Dr. Muhammad Mushsin Khan, vol. 1. p. 397 (709)

5. *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1. p. 237 (864)

6. *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1. p. 250-251 and *Bukhari*, op. cit. vol. 1. p. 420.

"Narrated Ibn Umar: The Prophet saw expectoration in the direction of the *qibla* of the mosque while he was leading the prayer, and scratched it off. After finishing the prayer, he said, "Whenever any one of you is in prayer he should know that God is in front of him. (7)

Performance of each part of the prayer properly is essential, for it adds to the excellence of the prayer. The Holy Prophet greatly emphasised the importance of the proper performance of each part of the prayer.

Straightening the Rows

"Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, 'Stand close together in your rows; bring them near one another, and stand neck to neck, for by Him in whose hand my soul is, I see the devil coming in through openings in the row like a number of small black sheep.' (8)

"Abu Masud Al Ansari said: God's Messenger used to touch our shoulders at the prayer and say, 'Keep straight; do not be irregular and so have your hearts irregular.' (9)

"Ibn Umar reported God's Messenger as saying, 'Set the rows in order, stand shoulder to shoulder, close the gaps, be compliant in the hands of your brethren, and do not leave openings for the devil. If anyone joins up a row God will join him up, but if anyone breaks a row God will cut him off.' (10)

7. *Bukhari*, op.1. p.402 (720)

8. *Mishkat*, vol.1, p.224 (transmitted by Abu Dawud).

9. *Mishkat*, vol.1, p.223 (Muslim transmitted)

10. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.226 (Abu Dawud and Nasai transmitted).

Anas bin Malik heard God's Messenger saying that straightening of rows is essential for perfect and correct prayer and he added that everyone of us used to put his shoulder with the shoulder of his companion and his foot with the foot of his companion" (11)

Ruku and Sujud

"Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, 'perform the bowing (*ruku*) and the prostration (*sujud*) properly, for I swear by God that I can see you behind me.'" (12)

"Abu Masud Al Ansari reported God's Messenger as saying, 'A man's prayer does not avail unless he keeps his back steady when bowing and prostrating himself.'" (13)

"Abu Qatada reported God's Messenger as saying, 'The one who commits the worst theft is he who steals from his prayer.'" When asked how one could steal from his prayer, he replied, 'By not performing his bowing (*ruku*) and his prostration (*sujud*) properly.' (14)

The Tashahhud

"Ibn Umar said that when God's Messenger sat at the *Tashahhud* he placed his left hand on his left knee and his right hand on his right knee and pointed with his forefinger." (15)

11. *Bukhari*, vol.1., pp.388-389 (690, 692).

12. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.178 (*Bukhari* and *Muslim* transmitted)

13. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.179 (transmitted by Abu Dawud, *Tirmizi*, *Nasai*, *Ibn Majah* and *Darimi*).

14. *Mishkat*, p.181 (Ahmad transmitted it).

15. *Mishkat*, p.185 (Muslim transmitted it).

"Nafi said that when Abdullah bin Umar sat during the prayer he placed his hands on his knees, pointed with his finger and gave his whole attention to it. He then said that God's Messenger had said, 'It has a more severe effect on the devil than iron, meaning the forefinger.'" (16)

Excellence of Prayer in Congregation

"Abu Hurairah reported that God's Messenger found some people staying away from certain prayers and he said: 'I intend that I order a person to lead people in prayer, and then go to the persons who have not joined the congregational prayer and then order their houses to be burnt by the bundles of fuel!'" (17)

"Ibn Umar reported God's Messenger as saying, 'prayer said in congregation is twenty seven times more excellent than prayer offered by a single person'" (18)

"Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Prophet said, 'God will prepare for him who goes to the mosque every morning and in the afternoon (for congregational prayer) an honorable place in paradise with good hospitality for what he has done.'" (18)

All the traditions of the Holy Prophet show that proper performance of prayer in the manner it was commanded by God and practised by the Holy Prophet is essential.

Timing of Prayer

16. *Mishkat*, op.cit., (Ahmad transmitted it)

17. *Sahih Muslim*, vol.1., pp.314-315 (and *Mawatta*, Imam Malik Urdu translation by Waheed uz Zaman p.79, and *Bukhari*, *Tirmizi* Urdu translation by Hamid ur Rahman Siddiqi, p.154.

18. *Bukhari*, vol.1.p.357 (631)

The five prayers each day are ordered at the appointed times for them by God and, if offered at any other time, they lose their real significance for individuals as well as for society. "Indeed prayer is a prescribed duty that should be performed at the appointed times by the believers (4:103)." And in Surah Bani Israel: "Establish prayer from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night, and be particular about the recital of the Qur'an at the dawn of the morning, for the recital of the Qur'an at the dawn is witnessed" (17:79). Again in Surah Ta Ha: "And glorify your Lord with His praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify Him during the hours of night and at the extreme of the day" (20:130)

The above verses of the Qur'an and in particular the last verse of Surah Ta Ha clearly prescribe the times of prayer made obligatory on the occasion of the *miraj*: Morning (*fajr*) prayer before sunrise, noon (*zuhr*) prayer when the day begins to decline, just afternoon; at afternoon (*asr*) prayer, between noon and sunset; evening (*maghrib*) prayer just after sunset; and night (*isha*) prayer during the hours of night, after the evening twilight has all faded from the horizon, before dawn. "It has been ordained that the first prayer is to be offered before the sunrise and the remaining four after declining of the sun till the darkness of the night." (19)

When daily prayer was made obligatory, the Angel *Gabriel* was sent to the Holy Prophet to define the limits of each prayer.

"Ibn Abbas reported God's Messenger as saying, 'Gabriel' twice led me in prayer at the House (*Ka'ba*). He prayed the noon (*zuhr*) prayer with me when

19, *The Meaning of Qur'an* Vol.V1., p.158.

the sun had passed the meridian to the extent of the thong of a sandal (ie, just after the declining of the sun); he prayed the afternoon (*asr*) prayer with me when everything's shadow was as long as itself; then he prayed the sunset (*maghrib*) prayer with me at the time when one who has been fasting breaks his fast; he prayed the night (*isha*) prayer with me when the twilight had ended; and he prayed the morning (*fajr*) prayer with me at the time when food and drink become forbidden to one who is fasting. On the following day he prayed the noon (*zuhr*) prayer with me when his shadow was as long as himself; he prayed the afternoon (*asr*) prayer with me when his shadow was twice as long as himself; he prayed the evening (*maghrib*) prayer with me at the time when one who has been fasting breaks his fast; he prayed the night (*isha*) prayer with me when about a third of the night had passed; and he prayed the morning (*fajr*) prayer with me when there was clear daylight. Then turning to me he said, "Muhammad, this is the time observed by the prophets before you, and the time is anywhere between these two times." (20)

The time schedule of daily prayers was thus prescribed by the *Qur'an* and defined by *Gabriel* by offering daily prayers with the Holy Prophet on two consecutive days." The holy Prophet and, after him, the blessed Companions scrupulously observed these hours throughout their lives and in all circumstances. Even in times of war they did not suffer an alteration in them. There has been such a great deal of continuity, regularity and uniformity about the prayer that it is impossible to find a parallel in any other community. The Muslim *Millat* has observed it zealously and passed it on dutifully from one generation to another without a single day's break, however adverse things might have

20. *Mishkat*, op.cit., Vol.1.p.119 (Abu Dawud and Tirmizi transmitted it).

been for it." (21)

Strict adherence to the time schedule as well as to the composition and contents of prayer by generations of Muslims all over the world since the time of the Holy Prophet, without any alteration or modification, has been phenomenal. This remarkable discipline in the observance of daily prayer is by itself a great tribute to the effectiveness and usefulness of this institution.

Wisdom of the Time of Prayers

There is a great wisdom in the time schedule of prayer. First, no action of this world is free from the bounds of time because it is proper and necessary to fix a time for everything. Secondly, human nature is such that unless timings are not fixed for a work that needs persistence, one can not do it punctually and regularly. Fixed timing develop in man keen interest, attention and a desire to fulfil his duty. Thirdly, the gathering of different people for congregation prayer is essential and for that the best way is to fix the timing of the five prayers so that people can easily come at the appointed time. Again, in these timing, special account has been taken of the natural tendency of human temperament to worship with regard to occasion. (22)

Daily prayer provides complete nourishment to the soul and a strong defence against the onslaughts of negligence, materialism and secularism. Shah Wali Allah Dehlvi has very ably described the wisdom of daily prayer in these words:

"The state of affairs and the programme of life of the *Ummat* can never be sound unless attention is paid to it at short intervals and after every little

21. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, *The Four Pillars of Islam*, Lucknow (India) 1976, p.15

22. *Hujjat Allah Al-Baligha*, Urdu translation by Allama Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq, pp.333-35

while. Thus a major portion of one's time is taken up by it. Our own experience is that a person who will go to bed with the intention of rising up for *tahajjud* (late night or early dawn prayer) will, at least, not sleep like an animal. In the same way, one who will be siezed with anxiety for prayer or any other form of worship will not easily give way to the inordinate desires of the flesh." (23)

The same is implied by the *hadith* of the holy prophet. According to *Ubaida bin Samit*, God's Messenger said, "If anyone wakes up at night and says the words of the *Kalimah*, or the praises and glorification of God, then makes supplication, he will receive an answer. And if he performs the ablution and prays, his prayer will be accepted." (24)

And *Muaz bin Jabal* reported God's Messenger as saying, "If any Muslim goes to bed in state of purity remembering God, then wakes up in the night and asks God for good, God will give it to him." (25)

It is pointed out on many occasions in the *Holy Qur'an* that prayer strengthens the spiritual powers of man against the attacks of devil and his followers. It is also prayer that brings man closer to God. When he gets closer to Him, he receives the gifts of His Mercy, Blessings and Favours, and his heart is purified from the whispers of the devil and human weaknesses and is strengthened to face with resolution and determination the power of evil from within and without. The time schedule of prayer provides an opportunity to the believers to establish regular prayer and thereby receive the Blessings of God and strengthen their defences against evil

23. Abul hassan Ali Nadwi, p.16.

24. *Mishkat*, Vol.1., pp.252-253 (*Bukhari* transmitted it).

25. *Mishkat*, p.253 (*Abu Dawud* transmitted it).

forces. The verses quoted above point to the natural phenomena of day and night and to the constant changes in the movement of the sun which continuously passes through the different stages of standing (*qiyam*), bowing (*ruku*) and prostration (*sujud*), every 24 hours. These movements are a constant reminder and an invitation to man to join with the natural phenomena in voluntary submission to his Creator. Thus these words are a reminder to man to observe five daily prayers in obedience to the Command of God and be in line with His other creations for his own benefit. He must know that "The celestial significance of these hours, their inner radiance and the heavenly Blessings which descend during them and the rich provision of spiritual advancement they contain (are immense and immeasurable but) are known only to God and His Prophet." (26)

We will, however, try to unveil some of the heavenly Blessings and significance of daily prayer in this book.

Contents of Prayer

People who offer daily prayer merely as a duty and as a Commandment of God without understanding what they are reciting in the prayer experience and enjoy immense benefits from it. They become most God-fearing and the belief in the eternal presence of God and in the man's accountability before Him on the Day of Judgement remains ever fresh in their mind. They lead their lives as slaves of God and regard Him as their real Sovereign and Ruler. This belief makes them responsible, conscientious and good human beings.

But people who offer prayer with a full realisation of its meaning and significance, and understand

26. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, op.cit., p.15.

what they are reciting in the prayer, how much, and to what extent, will it affect their ideas, behaviour and character? How much will it increase the power of their Faith and change the very colour of their life style? It is extremely difficult to understand and comprehend the effect of such a prayer. Perhaps a review of the contents of the daily prayer may give some glimpses of these effects. (27)

Adhan and Takbir

Five times a day people hear the call for prayer, 'God alone is Great', and I bear witness that there is no deity but God'. This glorification and praise of the Lord fills the heart of the believers with respect and humility. This constant reminder of the Real Sovereign and His great power shatters the claims and pretensions of the worldly powers, as well as of human desires, "It is that clear, eloquent and forceful affirmation which is capable of evoking a ready response among all peoples and at all times. Before it, the magic spell of the mightiest of rulers and the most powerful of men, as well as of the man-made deities, idols and images is broken and they are reduced to a heap of ashes, provided of course, that it is uttered with conviction and understanding. The brief but revolutionary proclamation strikes at the root of all such claims, pretensions, myths and deceptions and destroys them for ever. It rejects and repudiates the power and authority of everyone except God and puts an end to each and every source of tyranny and corruption." (28)

It rejects and repudiates the power and authority of everyone except God and puts an end to each and source of tyranny and corruption." (29)

27. Abu Ala Maududi, *Khutbat*, 1974. 147

28. Abul Hassan Nadawi, op.cit., pp. 26-27

29. Abdul Hassan Nadwi, *Four pillars of Islam*, op.cit pp. 26-27.

"When a person believes with a sincere heart in this affirmation and proclaims *Allahu Akbar* (God alone is Great) before commencing his prayer as a mark of testimony to the Greatness and Majesty of the Lord, and this conviction sinks into the innermost depths of his heart and begins to pervade his entire existence, the might and splendour of the worldly kings, political leaders and overlords loses its significance in his eyes and they evoke no fear or wonder in him. He becomes supremely indifferent to them and the display of their wealth or power fails to make any impression on him." (28)

Facing the Ka'ba and Glorification (Tasbeih)

On hearing *Adhan*, a believer gets ready for prayer. He performs the ablution to clean his hands, face, arms and feet and stands facing the *Ka'ba* for prayer. He dissociates himself from worldly engagements for a few moments and seeks audience with his Creator. This reminds him of the purpose of life and his real role in it. Then he starts paying tribute to His Glory, Majesty and Sublimity and admits his own humbleness. "O God, Gloried Praiseworthy and Blessed is Your Name exalted Your Majesty. There is no deity worthy of worship except You."

This has a tremendous effect, Psychologically, mentally and physically, in moulding the ideas, feelings and even behaviour pattern of a person, then seeks the protection of God from the devil and his whispers and starts the prayer with the Name of God.

Surah Fateha

The prayer starts with praises of God, the Lord of the Universe and creator of all mankind, which reminds man of his relationship with other human beings, spiritually through the realisation that their Lord

and Sovereign is the same and physically through the feeling that they are all children of the same parents. Thus, in prayer, one submits one's self, along with one's fellow beings, to Almighty God in complete obedience, submission and reverence. And understanding with complete realisation that God alone is the Master and Sovereign, one asks God for His help, "You alone we worship and Your help do we seek."

This humble prayer has a magical effect on one's feeling and behaviour. As soon as one feels that, in fact, there is none worthy of worship and obedience except God, one also realises that there can be none who could give him any tangible help in solving his worldly problems as well. This restores confidence in one's ability to lead life without fear or danger of anything. And one's attitude to life and behaviour towards his fellow beings and other creatures becomes just and benevolent. By submitting one's self to one's Lord, one is relieved of all other pressures and demands and feels within as if one has become master of the rest of creation. Thus, through obedience to One God, one becomes master of His creation and despair and disappointment never enter his kingdom. One lives a fuller life of success and glory as a servant of God in the service of His creatures but without pride or show.

"Life is but another name for prayer and supplication. It is through it that a bond is established between deity and devotee, man and man, strong and weak, rich and poor, ruler and ruled. Once these two things, prayer and supplication, are reserved exclusively for God, all the earthly chains are broken, and polytheism, with all other forms of idolatry, comes to an end. It is the greatest pledge a Muslim makes to his Lord, again and again, during the day and the night He is, of course, expected

to be heedful of what he says. The entire order of life, outside the prayer is ruthlessly driving him towards two things: fear and seeking of help, and it is against these that he sets himself when he enters the covenant and makes the affirmation we have just mentioned." (29)

After confirmation of his allegiance to one God, and firm promise of help from Him, man prays to His Lord to show him the Right Way in these words, "Guide us in the Straight Path, the path of those whom You blessed and not of those who deserved Your anger or went astray." Obviously success is linked with the right approach and the right objective. Unless one is on the right course one cannot reach one's destination. It is therefore very important that man should pray to his Lord to guide him to this Right Way: to the way of past successful and righteous individuals and nations, who received His Blessings and were successful and not the way of those who disobeyed Him and earned His Anger, nor of those who never found the Right Way of life.

"The worshipper, therefore, prays to God to Guide him to the Straight Path. The guidance is his first and foremost need: on it alone rests the wonderful charm and fascination of Paradise. Without it, nothing is worth living for, and, with it, there is nothing which cannot be given up. Man has always been in quest of it. It is ingrained in his heart and soul. But this guidance cannot attain reality in a vacuum. It can be appreciated and acted upon only when we have some living examples before us. There are the ones known by the names of the Prophet, the Truthful, the Martyrs and the Righteous."

"At the same time, it is demanded of believers to keep clear of those who stray away from the path of

Guidance and take to ingratitude, sensuality and self-destruction or go to the extreme of defiance and transgression and lay themselves open to Divine Displeasure and chastisement or are guilty of concealment, distortion and misinterpretation of Faith." (30)

Thus this short but comprehensive and meaningful *Surah* of the *Qur'an* has a very deep and corrective effect on man when, after glorification (*Tasbih*), he begins to praise His Merciful and Gracious God, the Lord of the Universe, and then admits His Sovereignty and kingdom, and that he owes allegiance to Him, and then begs help from Him in all his affairs. And finally, he prays to Him for guidance to the goal of success and to make his task easier he also asks for good examples to follow so that he may not wander in the ways of wrong and evil people. Finally, some part of the *Qur'an*, usually one of the short *Surahs*, may be recited in the standing position (*qiy'am*).

Worship (Ruku and Sujud)

After recitation of some portion of the *Qur'an*, one goes from the standing (*qiy'am*), position to bowing (*ruku*), then one straightens one's back and says, "Glory to my Lord the Majestic." One repeats these words a few times. Bowing one's head and body low in *ruku* signifies allegiance and submission to the Real Sovereign, the One God. The servant has acknowledged his humbleness by bowing his head before his Master and is begging for His favours and mercy.

After preliminary allegiance, one raises one's head and comes to the standing position (*qiy'am*) saying, "God has heard the prayer of the one who has praised Him. Our Lord, all praise is for you. This

30. Abul Hassan Nadawi, pp. 33-34.

signifies acceptance of one's allegiance as well as prayer. God is now asking His servant to ask of Him whatever he likes. Thus through (*ruku*) one comes a bit nearer to his Lord and feels His presence and can put his personal requests before Him.

Now man is accepted as a faithful servant and can be admitted into full audience with his lord. Claiming His Greatness, he goes down on his knees and into full prostration (*sajdah*) before God, "Glory to my Lord Most High." He repeats this a few times in excitement and ecstasy, feeling the presence of His Lord. This gradual bowing and leaning down in prostration completely destroys the pride and vanity of man and brings him within the spiritual climate of reverence and humility. "When he arrives at the last stage of submission and places the most dignified part of his body, his head, on the lowly ground, he prays the highest tribute to the Greatness and sublimity of the Almighty by declaring 'Glory to my Lord Who Alone is High.'

The Majesty of this proclamation is heightened by the solemnity of the posture and sacredness of the place where he offers the *salat*. Between the two *sajdahs*, the worshipper also sits up for a while in order to reequip himself spiritually for the next act of prostration and derive added joy and vitality from it." (31)

Two successive prostrations (*sujud*) with a short interval of sitting (*jalsa istrakat*) is the end of man's pride and vanity on the one hand, and the fulfilment of his submission and repentance on the other. Now he is nearest to God, with his head on the ground, completely surrendering all his worldly honours and dignities. In this state of humility, he is in full communion with his Creator. He can

31. Abul Hassan Nadwi, p. 34.

pray and ask anything of Him for "The servant is nearest to his Lord in *sajdah*." Thus by submitting himself before his Lord, man becomes the ruler of the world. All creation comes under his command and into his service as soon as he bows down before his Lord. That is why it is said that man wins glory in humility and submission to God, and the kingdom of earth in prostration (*sajud*).

Tashahhud

After completing the required *rakah* of the prayer through *qiy'am*, *ruku* and *sujud*, one sits (*qaadah*) and recites *tashahhud* to complete his prayer. With all sincerity, a believer says that "All worship through words, actions, and sanctity are for God alone." As the believer has reached this stage of sincerity and humility through the teaching and example of the Holy Prophet, he invokes the blessings and peace of the Lord on the Holy Prophet, and also peace on all believers. Then he prays to God for His Favours and success for the Holy Prophet and his followers and ends the *salat* with a prayer for himself, his progeny, his parents and all believers. He ends the prayer by conferring peace and blessings for the believers sitting on his right and then for those sitting on his left. In other words, he has come back from the presence of his Lord the richer with the wealth of spiritual blessing and Divine favours, and he wants to share these with his fellow-worshippers.

This is the prayer with which a believer starts his day in the early morning. Then he engages himself in various activities for a few hours and comes back at noon (*zuhr*) to seek another audience with his Lord, to enrich himself with Divine blessing and refresh and reaffirm his role in life, and then goes back to his daily work. Again, after a few hours he returns in the afternoon (*asr*) to renew

his covenant with God. Then at the end of the day, when the sunsets he returns for the evening prayer (*maghrib*). Thus prayer is a constant reminder to the believer of his role in life. When daily activities cease, he goes to his Lord for a final audience of the day so that he may pay his last homage to Him before going to bed. This is how a believer completes his day. The repetition of prayer at regular intervals maintains his contact with the Creator and thereby keeps the memory of a believer fresh with the object and mission of his life.

Summary: According to Shah Wali Ullah, *salat* consists of three things. First, humility at the Majesty and Greatness of God. Second, expression of God's Majesty and one's humbleness, with pleasure, in the physical postures of prayer. It is generally thought that a stiff neck is a sign of pride and vanity, while leaning the head forward is an expression of humility and respect. Third, bowing one's head on the ground is the height of humbleness. These three have been very common forms of respect for kings and dignatories all over the world. The best prayer is the one in which all the three forms of respect are present (ie, standing) (*qiy'am*) bowing (*ruku*) and prostration (*sajdah*), advancing from the lowest state of humility to the highest (ie., prostration). The benefit of gradual movement from the lowest to the highest state of humility in the presence of God, the most Majestic and the Highest, is immense. These stages of nearness to God are real and the cornerstone of prayer.

In fact, prayer is a comprehensive formula from which everyone can benefit according to his own ability and effort. Prayer provides an opportunity to everyone for total concentration and a vision of the Lord. It is their sincerity and the degree of their dependence upon their Lord which will determine the degree of reality of His Vision or otherwise. The

state of bowing (*ruku*) and prostration (*sajdah*) of each person will assist in receiving vision (*hadh-ur*). This is why the prayer is equally beneficial to all, but each benefits from it according to his ability and effort.(32)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

SECTION TWO

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

32. *Hujjat Allah Al Balighah*, Urdu translation by Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq, Karachi, p.136-137

PHYSICAL CLEANLINESS

Salat (prayer) develops neat and clean habits in believers. If they are regular in prayer, they have to keep their body and clothes clean because prayer cannot be offered in dirty clothes and with an unclean body. They have, therefore, to keep themselves and their clothes clean from all kinds of dirt. A believer must perform the ablution before he can offer his prayer. There can be no prayer without proper ablution. A believer, therefore, has to wash his hands, face, arms and feet five times a day in order to offer his prayers. He has to rinse his mouth, and clean his nose and ears and eyes before every prayer. He has to brush his teeth at least once a day. The Muslims are under obligation to perform total ablution (*wudu*) before each prayer: "O you who believe, when you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if you are polluted, then wash yourselves. God desires not to place you in a difficulty, but He wishes to purify you." (5:6)

Obviously, God does not want to create any unnecessary hardships for man but He does want one to be clean and pure. This verse makes total ablution compulsory before every prayer. It also makes bathing obligatory for all Muslims, men and women, who have had sexual relations, since the last ablution or a discharge, and for men who have had an ejection of semen and for women who have completed menses or confinement. According to Abdullah bin Umar, the Holy Prophet said that no prayer was accepted without proper ablution. And Abu Hurairah reported the Messenger of God as saying, "The prayer of one who has annulled his state of ceremonial purity will not be accepted until he performs ablution." Ali reported the Messenger of God as saying, "The key to prayer is purification (through ablution)." Ali

bin Talq reported the Messenger of God as saying, "When any of you passes wind he should perform ablution." (1)

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that proper ablution is performed before every prayer. A Muslim who performs his prayer regularly five times a day also performs total ablution five times a day. How can he possibly remain untidy or unclean? This regular attendance to cleanliness gradually develops very neat habits in believers and makes them physically clean. Ablution before every prayer is a constant training in cleanliness and purification. Five times a day, all the year round, a Muslim is made to check his cleanliness and the purity of his body as well as his dress.

The Holy Prophet greatly emphasised the importance of cleanliness and enjoined upon his followers in various ways to keep themselves, their houses and their mosques neat and clean. Abu Malik Al Ashari reported God's Messenger as saying, "Being purified is half of Faith." According to Jabir, the Messenger of God said, "The key of Paradise is prayer, and the key of prayer is cleanliness and purification." Abdullah As Sunabihi reported the Messenger of God as saying, "When a believer performs the ablution, and rinses his mouth, sins go out of his mouth; when he snuffs up water, sins go out of his nose; when he washes his face, sins are washed off his face, so that they go out from under his eyelashes; when he washes his hands, sins go out from his hands, so that they go out from under his fingernails; when he wipes his head, sins go out from his head so that they go out from his ears, and when he washes his feet, sins go out from his feet so that they go out from under his toenails. Then his walking to the mosque and his prayer will provide

1. *Mishkat*, Vol.1., pp.66-70

extra blessings for him." (2)

Perfect performance of the ablution, according to these sayings of the Messenger of God, completely wipes out all the sins of the person who performs *wudu*, for prayer with devotion and sincerity. But "sins" may also be taken to refer to the physical dirt and uncleanness which is washed away by ablution. Daily ablution for prayer will keep a Muslim neat and clean from all kinds of dirt. It will keep his hands, face and feet clean. Constant rinsing of his mouth will keep his mouth clean and free from odour. It will also keep his nose, eyes and ears clean. Thus, this regular drill in cleanliness will keep his body clean and therefore free from disease.

According to Abu hurairah, the Messenger of God once asked his companions, "Do you believe that dirt can remain on a person bathing five times a day in a stream running in front of his door?" The companions replied in the negative, that no dirt can remain on his body. The Messenger of God then remarked, "Exactly the same is the effect of prayer offered five times a day. With the grace of God, it washes away all the sins." Ablution wipes out physical dirt while prayer wipes out spiritual dirt (i.e., sins). A believer first removes physical impurities from his body by ablution and prepares himself psychologically to meet his Lord, for his inner purification by prayer. In fact, there is a very close relationship between physical cleanliness and spiritual purification. As there cannot be a healthy mind in an unhealthy body, there cannot be spiritual purification without physical cleanliness.

Thus ablution is necessary for physical cleanliness of the body so that it may be ready to receive a

2. *Mishkat*, Vol.1., pp.65-67

spiritual blessing from its Creator through the establishment of daily prayer.

Obligatory to wash all parts of the body

Anyone who performs ablution (*wudu*) must wash all the major parts of the body, including hands, face, feet and head. "It is reported by Jabir that Umar bin Khattab said that a person performed ablution and left a small part equal to the space of a nail unwashed. The Messenger of God saw that and said: 'Go back and perform ablution well'. He then went back (performed ablution well) and offered the prayer." (3) "Humran, the freed slave of Uthman, said, 'I saw Uthman calling for a vessel (of water) and poured water over his hands three times and then washed them. Then he put his right hand in the vessel and rinsed his mouth and cleansed his nose. Then he washed his face three times and his hands up to the elbow three times; then wiped his head, then washed his feet three times. Then he said that God's Messenger had said: He who performed ablution like this ablution of mine and offered two (*rakah*) of prayer without allowing his thoughts to be distracted, all his previous sins would be expiated." (4)

Cleaning of the Nose

Cleaning of the nose is a part of the ablution and anyone performing the ablution for prayer must also clean his nose. "Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying: When anyone of you performs ablution, he must snuff in his nose water and then clean it." (5)

3. *Sahih Muslim*, Vol., 1. p.155(474)

4. *Sahih Muslim*, Vol, 1. p.150(437) and *Bukhari*, Vol 1. pp.113(161)

5. *Sahih Muslim*, Vol.1., p.153(458).

Cleaning of The Teeth

The Holy Prophet also emphasised the necessity of cleaning the teeth before every prayer. And he said that he would have made it obligatory for all Muslims to clean their teeth before every prayer, if it had not been very burdensome for them. According to Abu Hurairah, the Messenger of God said, "Were it not that it might distress my people, I would order them to delay the evening prayer and use the tooth stick before every prayer." "A'isha said that the Messenger of God did not awake after sleep by night or by day without using the tooth stick before performing the ablution. She also reported God's Messenger as saying that, "the prayer before which the tooth stick is used is seventy times more excellent than that before which it is not used." (6)

"Shuraih bin Hani said that he asked A'isha what Messenger did first when he entered his house. She replied that he used the tooth stick (to clean his teeth)." (7)

Bathing

The Holy Prophet made bathing on Fridays obligatory for adult Muslims. It is reported by Ibn Umar that God's Messenger said, "When any of you goes to the Friday prayer he should bathe." Abu Saeed reported that God's Messenger said, "That bathing on Fridays is obligatory for every one who has reached puberty." (8) According to Abu Hurairah, God's Messenger said, "It is a duty of every Muslim to bathe once a week, wash his head and his body." (8)

All these sayings of the Holy Prophet clearly indicate how important is cleanliness in Islam. All these

6. *Sahih Muslim*, Vol., p.158(487) and *Mishkat*, Vol.1. p.79.

7. *Mishkat*, Vol.1. pp.79-80

8. *Mishkat*, Vol.1., p.108.

preliminary preparations of washing the hands, face and cleaning the teeth, etc. are blessings of daily prayer. This great emphasis on ablution, cleaning teeth and bathing is a mere preparation for prayer. Therefore it can be said without any fear of contradiction that all this ablution and cleanliness of body and clothes is because of prayer. Thus prayer gives, directly and indirectly, so many blessings of cleanliness that cannot be enumerated.

Bathing is also obligatory on all those Muslims who have had sexual relations and all those women who have had menses or confinement. A Muslim man and women must bathe after every sexual meeting and a woman must bathe after the end of menstruation or confinement before she offers her prayer. The commandment regarding bathing is contained in *Surah-Al Nisa* in the following words: "O you who believe, go not near prayer....after sexual intercourse....until you have washed yourself." (4:43) The injunction regarding menstruation is contained in the following verse: "So keep aloof from women during their menses and go not near them until they are clean. But when they have cleaned themselves, go to them as God has commanded you. Surely God loves those who turn much to Him and He loves those who purify themselves." (11.222)

"It is reported by A'isha that whenever the Holy-Prophet took a bath after sexual intercourse, first he washed his hands then performed ablution as for prayer, then he poured water on his head and body." (9) She also said that the Prophet used to bathe for four reasons: after seminal defilement, On Friday, after being cupped, and after washing the dead." (10) She also reported God's Messenger as saying, "When the parts which are circumcised pass

9. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1., p. 88.

10. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1., p. 108 (Abu Dawud transmitted).

one another, washing is necessary." (11) Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "There is sexual defilement under every hair, so wash the hair and cleanse the skin." (11) Umm. Salama said she told God's Messenger that she kept her hair closely plaited, and asked whether she should undo it when washing after sexual defilement. He replied, "No, it is enough for you to throw three handfuls over your head, then pour water over yourself, and you will be purified." (12) A'isha narrated: The Holy Prophet said to me, "Leave the prayer at the time of menses and when it is over, wash the blood off your body (take a bath) and start praying." (13)

Friday Bath

Abu Said reported God's Messenger as saying, "The taking of a bath on Friday is obligatory on everyone who has reached puberty. And Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "It is a duty for every Muslim to bathe once a week, washing his head and his body." (14) Al Bara reported God's Messenger as saying, "It is a duty for Muslims to bathe on Friday, and one may apply some of his wife's perfume, but if he can get none, water is a perfume for him." (15)

Abu Said and Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "If anyone bathes on Friday, puts on his best clothes, applies a touch of perfume, if he has any, then goes to the congregational prayer and

11. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1, p. 90 (Trimizi and Ibn Majah transmitted).

12. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1, p. 89 (Muslim transmitted).

13. *Bukhari*, Vol. 1, p. 196 (327).

14. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1, p. 108 (Bukhari and Muslim transmitted).

15. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1, p. 292 (Ahmad and Tirmizi transmitted).

takes care not to step over people, then prays what God has prescribed for him, then keeps silent from the time his *Imam* comes out till he finishes his prayer, it will atone for his sins during the previous week." (16)

These *hadith* are clear pointers to the fact that bathing forms a very important part of the Islamic creed in regard to cleanliness, and more particularly as concerns congregational prayers on Fridays.

Clothes

The Holy Prophet also appreciated Muslims wearing clean clothes and using perfume on Friday. Muslims are always required to keep their bodies and clothes clean, especially at the time of prayer when perfect cleanliness and purity of body, clothes and mind is needed. It is absolutely necessary for a believer to cover his body and put on clean clothes before he can offer his prayer. His prayer becomes void if he is not properly dressed: "O children of Adam take your adornment at every time and place of prayer." (7:31)

Obviously this verse forbids Muslims to offer prayer in nakedness. They are told in this verse to dress themselves properly before going to prayers. The use of the word "*zinat*" shows that it means not only clothes that add grace to the wearer, but also cleanliness and other formalities that no man or woman would neglect when appearing even before a great human dignitary, much less when standing in the presence of Almighty God in prayer. And in *Surah Maidah*, believers are told to abstain from uncleanness in these words: "And thy garments purify and uncleanness shun." (74:4-5)

16. *Mishkat*, p. 291 (Abu Dawud transmitted).

Here the Holy Prophet is commanded to teach principles of cleanliness to his followers so that they may always remain neat and clean. And this teaching and training in cleanliness had so great an effect on the Muslims that God Himself praises their cleanliness in these words: "In it are men who love to purify themselves, and God loves those who purify themselves." (9:108)

what an important place is assigned to cleanliness in Islam: it is a means to win the Pleasure and Blessings of God. A true believer must necessarily be pure in body, clothes and mind. All the preliminaries of prayer described earlier help to attain this. The above verse clearly gives a picture of those early Muslims who acquired such a high standard of cleanliness through the establishment of prayer.

Taharat (Purity)

Purity as indicated by the word *taharat* is more than mere physical (or bodily) cleanliness. It refers to that act of purifying which cleans and purifies man of all visible as well as invisible dirt. This feeling of purity and cleanliness is an extraordinary characteristic of believers. Non-Muslims, especially westerners, can hardly understand the deep significance of purity. They clean their body and clothes with water and soap and seem quite satisfied with the standard of their cleanliness and even boast of it. But this level of cleanliness is not even half of what is required of believers.

Non-believers wash their body and clothes with water but never care whether the water is also clean. If you take a bath and come out of the dirty water of the tub without washing your body with clean water, you may feel physically (or even hygienically) clean, but it offends a refined person. How can you possibly be clean and pure when you come

out of dirty water? You may think that you are clean physically but you cannot feel clean psychologically. In order to have this feeling of purity, you must therefore wash your body with clean water before you come out of the tub.

Then, with the use of toilet paper after answering the call of nature, you may have partially cleaned your filth but you cannot really feel clean psychologically and acquire the standard of purity set by Islam. A Muslim cannot under normal conditions perform his prayer after answering the call of nature until he has washed himself with clean water. It is obligatory for believers to wash themselves with clean water whenever they go to the bathroom for this purpose, and so to keep their clothes and body clean and pure. To be clean and pure is one of the important commandments of Islam.

This cleanliness does not refer only to the outward act of purification but also to the purification of mind and soul. For there is a very close relationship between the outward act of cleanliness and inward purification of mind and soul. The outward appearance undoubtedly affects man's inner feelings, because it nourishes and develops his ability to receive spiritual blessings and Divine favours. One who does not care for physical cleanliness and purification will find it extremely difficult, if not practically impossible, to develop effectively a feeling of cleanliness in his heart. There is a psychological relationship between the two. The development of the outward form is, to a certain extent, absolutely essential for the development of the inner self. This is why Islam has enjoined its followers to clean and purify their clothes, their body and their houses and has made it a means of winning the love of God: "Surely God loves those who turn to Him, and He loves those who purify themselves." (11:222) And in *Surah Nisa*: "In it are

men who love to purify themselves. And God loves those who purify themselves."

These verses clearly indicate that purification is a quality of believers. They always remain clean and pure in body, mind and soul because they love purification and also because they desire to win the Pleasure and Blessings of God Who loves clean and pure people.

The wives of the Holy Prophet were to serve as models of virtue and purity to believers and were also required to teach by their practical example, the principles of Islam. They are told in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an* to establish regular prayer in order that they might be purified: "God only desires to take away uncleanness from you, O people of the household, and to purify you with a thorough purification." (33:33) It is reported by A'isha that the messenger of God called Ali, Fatimah, Hassan and Hussain and put a piece of cloth over them and prayed: "O God! these are the members of my household. Take away uncleanness from them and purify them."

Musaib bin Saeed reports from Abdullah bin Umar that he heard the Holy Prophet saying that "God does not accept prayer without purification." Imam Nawawi says that this *hadith* is a clear testimony to the fact that purification is essential for prayer. And the Muslim Jurists agree that purification is an essential condition for the acceptance of prayer and that no prayer is accepted without proper ablution. Thus purification and cleanliness are the blessings of prayer.

كَلَّا لَا تَطْفَعُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ

SECTION THREE
SIGNIFICANCE OF PHYSICAL
POSTURES IN PRAYER

SIGNIFICANCE OF PHYSICAL POSTURES IN PRAYER

It is pity that so much effort is being wasted in transcendental meditation (T.M) to revive human consciousness (the soul) to the supreme Reality of the Universe. A cursory study of history shows that this technique was never really effective even in the old days and was only confined to a few hermits and Rishis. It was an intellectual exercise of the mind which was practised by a very few individuals of very high calibre to quench their thirst for the Divine Union and was practically beyond the comprehension of the common man in the street. It is a mental exercise which quietens the mind so long as the person is in that state of meditation but has no permanent effect which can give an individual peace of mind in a practical way.

Transcendental meditation (T.M) without any conscious objective cannot bring permanent peace of mind. It is a negative approach to human problems and history bears witness to the fact that such intellectual and mental exercises have never achieved anything permanent. It has, however, a temporary effect. It is true that one experiences a soothing effect when in the state of transcendental meditation, but this effect is not confined to this method alone. Any kind of mental exercise, in T.M in Subud, or in any other form, will effect the body's physiology and thereby cause changes in an electroencephalogram (E.E.G or brain waves) and produce similar effects. But it is yet to be proved that such changes do produce any effect of a permanent nature. The human mind is affected by various kinds of creative mental exercises (based on the science of creative intelligence) but such exercises have long been confined to intellectuals or hermits among Hindus or Christians. They are beyond the comprehension of ordinary individuals. Moreover, mental exercises which provide some temporary

comfort to an individual cannot be effectively used to solve the complicated problems of mankind.

Above all, it is a mental exercise in a vacuum without any conscious objective or goal. One practises T.M without any clear goal before him going from nowhere to nowhere and such an exercise cannot really be expected to produce fruitful and beneficial results of any permanent value. In the olden days, Rishis and hermits did practice it, but they had a clear vision of their objective. They wanted to achieve nearness to their Creator through creative reflections (meditations). It was not an exercise in a vacuum, like modern T.M. But even this did not achieve very encouraging results for it remained an intellectual luxury of the few and was never considered a recipe for the ills of mankind.

Now the question arises: do we need such mental exercises for fun, or momentary excitement and comfort, or something which may provide a real solution to our problems? Obviously mankind is in need of something positive, practical and realistic that may help to secure peace, and happiness at individual as well as at national level. People have lost peace of mind through over-indulgence in pleasures and neglect of their celestial and spiritual needs. A philosophy of life which can bring proper coordination and understanding between the physical and spiritual needs of man could solve many of the problems that face him today. Man has lost his relationship with the Creator and is now wandering around in the wilderness of abstract thinking in search of peace. Surely he can regain his peace of mind through re-establishing his link with his Creator. And the shortest route to renew their relationship is to open dialogue with Him through prayers.

It seems very likely that there exists a very intimate

relationship between the performance of prayer and Divine Favours. Presumably the physical postures and movements of prayer have a deep significance and important function in re-vitalising and re-igniting the potential of enlightenment and energy inherent in every man. Prayer is composed of four main postures or movements of the body, i.e., *qiy'am*, *ruku*, *sajdah* and *qaadah*. It is very important that these four movements in the prayer are performed exactly in the same manner as taught by the Messenger of God. We offer our prayer to God because the Holy Prophet told us to do so. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that it must be performed in its every detail in the way it was performed by the Messenger of God himself.

Prayer is an obligatory duty and mere performance of it will no doubt absolve a believer of his duty to God, but if he wants to nourish and develop his self and soul, he must perform it in the way it was performed by the Messenger of God himself. The Holy Prophet laid great emphasis on the right performance of every act of prayer. *Qiy'am* must be performed properly; one must not bend forward or backward or lean sideways but stand straight with eyes fixed at the place of *sajdah* and not looking around. *Ruku* must be moderate, neither too low nor too high but in line with the body as taught by the Holy Prophet. There must be a reasonable gap between *ruku* and *sajdah* and between the two *sajdahs*, as advised by the Holy Prophet.

The importance of the proper performance of each part of prayer is emphasised by the Holy Prophet. Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, "perform the bowing and the prostration properly, for I swear by God that I can see you behind me!" According to Abu Masud Al Ansari the Messenger of God said, "A man's prayer do not avail him unless he keeps his back steady when bowing and prostrating him-

self." (1) Abu Qatada reported the Messenger of God as saying, "The one who commits the worst theft is he who steals from his prayer." When asked how one could steal from his prayer, he replied, "By not performing his bowing and prostration perfectly!"¹

There are details of *qiy'am*, *ruku* and *sajdah* in the *hadith* to help the believers to offer their prayer perfectly. According to A'isha, "God's Messenger used to begin prayer with *takbir* and the recitation of *Surah Fatiha*. When he bowed, he neither kept his head up nor bent it down, but kept it between these extremes; when he raised his head after bowing he did not prostrate himself until he had stood erect; when he raised his head after prostration he did not prostrate himself again until he was in the proper sitting position." (1)

If there is any slackness on the part of a believer in performance of any part of prayer, his prayer becomes void and he does not gain anything from it. According to Abu Hurairah, a man entered the mosque when the Messenger of God was sitting in it and offered his prayer. He then came and said, "peace be upon you" and God's Messenger replied, "peace be upon you. Go back and offer your prayer, for you have not prayed." He returned and prayed, then came and said, "peace be upon you." The Messenger of God replied, "And peace be upon you. Go back and pray again, for you have not prayed." On the third or fourth occasion he said, "Teach me, Messenger of God." So he said, "When you turn to the *qibla* and say, '*Allahu Akbar*,' then recite a convenient portion of the *Qur'an*; then bow and remain quietly in that position; then raise yourself and stand erect; then prostrate yourself and remain quietly in that position; then raise yourself and sit quietly." (2)

1. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1., pp. 178-181.

2. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1. p. 159.

This *hadith* confirms our assumption that performance of each part of prayer properly and perfectly as taught by the Holy Prophet is essential. Any variation or alteration in the performance of any part of prayer from what was taught by the Holy Prophet renders it a meaningless exercise.

This great emphasis on the proper performance of prayer, even in minute details, is a testimony to the fact that there is a close relationship between the various postures and movements in prayer and the acquisition of Divine favours and enlightenment. The Holy Prophet emphasised again and again the deep significance of the actual performance of the different parts of prayer. It must therefore be performed exactly in the way it was taught by the Holy Prophet, otherwise it will not be a prayer but an exercise of the body performed to please yourself or just an habitual act.

There seems to be an intimate relationship between the movements of prayer and Divine blessings. If it is offered perfectly, then it helps man to benefit from his inner potential energy in the development of his self and his soul. In daily prayer, God has given man the shortest and the quickest method of obtaining His Grace and Blessings. People in the past have spent ages, and sometimes, all their lives, to obtain a glimpse of His Glory and many have failed and died in the wilderness of disillusionment. A very few have received some form of enlightenment after years of hard and strenuous effort. People have starved themselves to annihilate their physical self in order to strengthen their soul and receive Divine Enlightenment, but without success. Some have spent all their lives with very little food and water in the jungles and in the valleys of mountains in the hope of rekindling and rejuvenating the dying light in their souls but with no, or only partial, success.

Prayer is a wonderful gift of God. There is no need in Islam to go to the mountains or jungles to kill your physical self in order to obtain *dhyan* (unbroken concentration) and through these forms of self-annihilation to reach for salvation. Prayer provides all the essential requisites for preparing the mind and transforming it into an extraordinary state capable of receiving the Divine Light. It provides physical as well as mental exercise in such a balanced way that neither is ignored or over-emphasised. This harmonious functioning of body and mind at the correct level and in the most balanced way is achieved only through prayer. All the movements of the body from the standing position to the prostrating position, are the expression of the extreme humility of the body before the Supreme Being. It is, in fact, total submission of the physical self before the Supreme Authority. Recitation of Divine words and praises of God in prayer have a cumulative effect on the mental powers of man. And in this process of submission of the body and the mind to the Divine Will through the synchronisation of movements and recitation of the *Qur'anic* verses in prayer, the spiritual power of man becomes stronger and gains full control over the physical self and gradually lifts it up to the Supreme Being.

This process of the total submission of the body and the mind before the Ultimate Authority is explained in the words of the *Holy Qur'an*: "When you threw (a handful of dust), it was not your act, but God's." (8:17) The action of the Holy Prophet in throwing stones at his enemies was entirely in obedience to the Command of God and there was no personal motive or any realisation of his own physical self. In fact every action of the faithful servants of God, performed in obedience to His Command, can be ascribed to God Himself.

According to Abu Hurairah, the Holy Messenger said:

"God says, 'My servant becomes closer to Me by performing those deeds which are obligatory on him. And he gets close to Me through constant observance of optional (*nafla*) prayer until he becomes My beloved. When he becomes My beloved, I become his ears through which he hears, his eyes through which he sees, and his hand with which he holds, and his feet with which he walks.'" (3) This *hadith* shows that all the powers of his body and mind come under the Guidance of God and man attains very close relationship with his Lord.

This harmonious working of the body and the mind helps in concentrating and thereby activating the latent energies of the physical self. This process gradually transforms the centrifugal (out-going) forces operating in mind and body into centripetal (inward-going) and unifying forces which lift man from the world of matter into the world of spirit and show him glimpses of the boundless spiritual world. In the course of the transformation of the concealed energies of the physical self into active unifying forces, the mind is slowly but surely released from the limitations of the physical self and is then able to conceive and grasp the meaning of the manifestations of the Supreme Being.

At this stage, man is fully prepared and ready, provided he maintains the standard of performance of his prayer, to receive the Blessings and Favours of the Supreme Power. In other words, he has reached the stage where he is in a position to establish close communion with God. And why not? After all, man represents the two important aspects of God's Creation, as stated by the *Holy Qur'an* in these words: "That which I have created with both My Hands." (38:75)

"Both hands" refers to the two aspects of God's

3. Forty *Hadith*, Dr. Ezzeddin Ibrahim, op: cit.

Creation. He has a physical body, which makes him one of the animals, and he has a soul, which makes him supreme over all other creation, including angels. When he is at his best in prayer, he leaps towards his spiritual world and establishes close contact with his Lord. And this is confirmed by a *hadith*, according to which a Muslim achieves audience with God (*hudhur*) in prayer: "Prayer is Miraj of the believers." Muslim jurists have taken this *hadhur* to mean the presence of angels in prayer.

This may be explained in another way. The harmonious working of body and mind helps to awaken the spiritual or super-sensory powers in man. The greater the harmony between the former two forces of man, the stronger the awakening of the super-sensory power in man. The proper balance between the triangular forces of body, mind and spirit acts like an electrical wire, which transfers the necessary electrical current from the main generating station to the electrical lamp. Just as it is unthinkable to transfer electricity direct from the main power house to a small electric lamp, similarly it is inconceivable to receive Divine Light or communion with God without proper harmony between the aforesaid forces.

It may, therefore, be said that an harmonious functioning of the triangular forces in man is absolutely necessary before any progress can be made in this direction. Unless body, mind and spirit (or the soul) are properly functioning in harmony, it is not possible for man to rekindle his soul from the Light of the Power of God or to achieve any sort of close communion with Him. People have in the past adopted various methods to achieve this harmonious functioning of the triangular forces within the self but have often taken years for very little or partial success.

Islam has given man a very short but effective

recipe in the form of prayer to achieve the required harmony between the triangular forces within him. Just study the form and the words of the prayer and how it is performed, and you will notice the wonderful combination it provides for body, mind and soul which no other religion or system has yet suggested. This process of the activation of spiritual or super-sensory powers in man can also be explained in this way. Man is a psychosomatic organism- he has a body, which is the external part of him and a mind, which is the internal part of him. His body is composed of matter which, in the ultimate physical analysis, consists of atoms. His mind represents the entire world of ideas, beliefs, hopes, fears and aspirations. All these belong to the world of consciousness, i.e., the inner side of man. This consciousness (mind) of man play a vital role in relating the soul of man to his environment. In other words, it is a vital factor in relating spirit to matter.

There are thus two worlds in man: the physical, represented by body and, the spiritual, represented by mind. The latter belongs to the invisible world which exists side by side with the visible world disclosed by sense perception. The latter is dimensional while the former is extra-dimensional. Internally man belongs to the invisible world, that is to say, his soul or spirit belongs to that world, externally he belongs to the visible world, that is to say, his body belongs to that world, but through consciousness man is related to both the worlds. If a man looks within his self he moves towards higher levels of consciousness and a deeper understanding of spiritual values. If, on the other hand, he devotes himself to the external world of matter, he tends to move away from the higher spiritual values to the lower values of the visible world.

Regular prayer helps to attain the right equilibrium between the spiritual and the material worlds of man. He lives in the world of matter, works in it for his livelihood and satisfies all his material needs, but, at the same time, he keeps his link with the spiritual world and further strengthens it. Prayer enables him to develop and widen his perception of the extradimensional spiritual world to such an extent that he is able to perceive and understand the things of a higher level of consciousness which he could hardly visualise before. Establishment of prayer will strengthen the extradimensional powers of man to such a degree that he will be able to establish close relationship with the Ultimate Power.

It must, however, be emphasised that this link cannot be maintained without the establishment of regular prayer. Prayer is the means as well as the end. It helps man to establish and maintain his link with God. If the institution of prayer or its proper performance is lost, the link with the spiritual world will automatically be cut off. Man has not yet known any other effective means of establishing and then maintaining his relationship with God. It is like a wire, as explained before, connected with the main Generator. As soon as the wire is disconnected from the main source of power, the light goes off, and all is darkness again. This wire is prayer.

Another way of putting the same experience is this. Prayer and the Divine words and phrases recited during the various postures of prayer do have a tremendous radionic effect on the physical as well as spiritual powers of man. The discovery of the Delawarr Radionic Camera has shown us some wonderful results in this connection. Unlike 'Classical science' which studies matter in its secondary state, that is to say its sensorily perceptible state,

radionics is concerned with matter in its primary state, "or the fourth dimensional state, the presence of which cannot be detected through the agency of the five senses."

The radionic technologist, like the electrical technologist, knows a little about the behaviour, but virtually nothing about the essential nature, of the energy which to some extent he is able by means of his instruments to tap." (4)

They took a photograph at the Delawarr Laboratories with a radionic camera of a water tap and then took another picture with the same camera after the water was blessed by the Rev. P.W. Eardley. The picture of the water tap after it was blessed was entirely different from that of the first picture of unblessed water, as shown by the pictures in figure 16 and figure 18. The picture in figure 16 shows that the blessing ceremony has done something to the water which immediately differentiates it from unblessed water as in figure 18. (4) This effect of blessing on things or of prayer on man cannot be detected through the agency of the five human senses. But certainly Divine words used in blessing or in prayer do have their effect on things and human beings. The existing media for obtaining information about man are very much limited and do not help us much in understanding things or phenomena which fall beyond the scope of the human senses. But lack of knowledge of something does not necessarily mean it does not exist.

The Divine words spoken in prayer produce a radionic effect on man. They produce imperceptible energy in the human body which assists in activating the consciousness (i.e., the mind) of man to such an extent that he becomes spiritually conscious of

the Ultimate Reality, i.e., God. The human mind is freed from the chains of the physical body and soars high up in the world of spirit. It gradually opens up invisible horizons of the spiritual world to the human mind which were quite unknown to it before. This is the first step to nearness to God. As a believer attains perfection in the performance of prayer, he is able to travel through unknown spiritual worlds and unveil some of the mysteries of this realm and gradually establish close communion with his Creator. In other words, prayer sharpens the extra-dimensional powers of the mind to such an extent that it becomes capable of receiving information which was far beyond its comprehension before.

Thus prayer, through multifarious ways beyond human comprehension, acts and reacts on the human mind until the latter is enlightened spiritually with the Nur (Ultimate Light) of the Universe. As all men do not possess similar or equal power, their personal experiences may vary considerably. Each man gains this experience according to his own internal as well as external powers. But regular prayer does provide opportunities to every believer to develop his latent energies within his self according to his potentialities and thereby establish his link with God. The greater the perfection in the performance of prayer, the closer the relationship with God.

Communion with the Divine Being is attained when prayer is performed perfectly and properly in body, mind and soul as instructed by the Holy Prophet. This is why the Holy Prophet said that prayer was a *mi'raj* for believers. It provides an opportunity to believers to have a direct and close relationship with God as did the Holy Prophet during the night of the *mi'raj*. This is also explained by another *hadith* when the Holy Prophet said: "When you

perform prayer, think that you are standing in front of God and seeing Him with your eyes. And if it is not possible for you to see Him, at least think that He is seeing you." When one achieves this *mi'raj* in prayer, he is bound to rise far above the physical barriers of this ethereal world and enter into the world of the unknown, experiencing new and wonderful things which he could never think of in his ordinary state of mind. The Companions of the Holy Prophet often experienced this in their prayer.

Anas used to perform long *ruku* and *sujud*; people often thought he had forgotten that he was offering his prayer. Abdullah bin Zubair often stood in *qi'yam* like a lifeless pillar and spent so much time in *sajdah* that pigeons of Baitullah sat on his back taking it to be an inanimate object. Once two Companions of the Holy Prophet were on night sentry duty on the battlefield. One was sleeping and the other stood in prayer. One arrow struck him while he was in prayer. He was bleeding but he completed prayer. After completing his prayer, he woke up his colleague on duty and told him that he was reciting one *surah* of the *Holy Qur'an* when the arrow struck him but he did not want to finish prayer without completing that *surah*. Once an arrow struck Ali. It was very deep and could not be pulled out. Ali asked his companion to pull it out while he was in prayer. He offered two *rukat* prayer and the arrow was pulled out of his leg, but he continued his prayer without feeling any pain.

Dr. Iqbal recognises the human quest for a Divine mission in these words. "But as I have said before, religious ambition sees higher than the ambition of philosophy. Religion is not satisfied with mere conception; it seeks a more intimate knowledge of and association with the object of its pursuit. (God). The agency through which this association

is achieved is the act of worship, ending in a spiritual illumination. The act of worship, however, affects different types of consciousness differently. In the case of the prophetic consciousness, it is mainly creative, i.e., tends to create a fresh ethical world wherein the Prophet, so to speak, applies the pragmatic test to his revelations. Thus you will see that, psychologically speaking, prayer is instructive in its origin. The act of prayer, aiming at knowledge, resembles reflection. Yet prayer at its highest is much more than abstract reflection. Like reflection it too is a process of assimilation, but the assimilative process in the case of prayer draws itself closely together and thereby acquires a power unknown to pure thought. In thought, the mind observes and follows the working of reality; in the act of prayer it ceases to be a seeker of slow-footed universability and rises higher than thought towards Reality itself, becoming a conscious participator in its life. There is nothing mystical about it. Prayer, as a means of spiritual illumination, is a normal, vital act by which the little island of our personality suddenly discovers its situation in a larger whole."

"Do not think I am talking of auto-suggestion. Autosuggestion has nothing to do with the opening up of the sources of life that lie in the depths of the human ego. Unlike spiritual illumination which brings fresh power by shaping the human personality, it leaves no permanent life. Nor I am speaking of some occult and special way of knowledge. All that I mean is to fix your attention on a real human experience which has a history behind it and a future before it. The quest of nameless nothing, as disclosed in Neo-Platonic mysticism--- be it Christian or Muslim---cannot satisfy the modern mind which, with its habits of concrete thinking, demands a concrete living experience of God. And the history of the race shows that the attitude of the mind

embodied in the act of worship is a condition for such an experience. In fact prayer must be regarded as a necessary complement to the intellectual activity of the observer of Nature. (5)

While discussing the real object of prayer, Dr. Iqbal says, "prayer, then, whether individual or associative, is an expression of man's inner yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe. It is a unique process of discovery whereby the searching ego affirms itself in the very moment of self negation, and thus discovers its own worth and justification as a dynamic factor in the life of the universe. True to the psychology of mental attitude in prayer, the form of worship in Islam symbolises both affirmation and negation. Yet, in view of the fact borne out by the experience of the race that prayer, as an inner act, has found expression in a variety of forms, the *Qur'an* says: "To every people We have appointed ways of worship which they observe. Therefore let them not dispute this matter with you, but invite them to your Lord for you are on the right way, but if they dispute with you, then say, God best knows what you do; He will judge between you on the Day of Judgement, in the matters wherein you differ. (22:66-69)."

"The form of prayer ought not become a matter of dispute. Which side you turn your face is certainly not essential to the spirit of prayer. The *Qur'an* is perfectly clear on this point: 'The East and West is God's, therefore whichever direction you turn, there is the face of God (2:109). And again, 'There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or West, but he is pious who believes in God, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Books and the Prophets, who for the love of God gives

5. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, 1977, pp. 89-91.

his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and to ransom the slaves; who observes prayer and pays *zakat*, and fulfils the contracts which he has made; and is patient in pain and hardship, and in time of trouble; those are they who are just, and those are they who fear the Lord. (2:177). " Yet we cannot ignore the important consideration that the posture of the body is a real factor in determining the attitude of mind." (5)

To sum up, prayer is the key which opens the gate of the kingdom of God. And, according to Ibn'Arabi, creative prayer becomes a dialogue between man and God and provides an opportunity to the earthly creature to open up his heart before his creator. It is creative because it is at once God's prayer and man's prayer. (6) Such an effective prayer opens up new horizons for man beyond the comprehension of an ordinary being. *Surah Fatiha* in the prayer provides this opportunity to man to enter into such a dialogue and enjoy the excitement and ecstasy of Divine vision.

According to the *hadith* reported by Abu Hurairah, the Holy Messenger said, "God says that I have divided the prayer between Myself and My servant into two parts. Half of it is for Me and half for My servant and I give whatever he asks me for. When the servant says 'All praise is for the Lord of the universe,' God replies, 'My servant is grateful to me.' When he says, 'Most Gracious, Most Merciful,' God says 'My servant has praised Me.' When he says 'Master of the Day of Judgement,' God says, 'My servant has exalted Me.' When the servant says, 'You do we worship and Your help do we seek,' God says 'This portion is shared between Me and My servant. I bestow whatever he asks.' When he says, 'Guide me

6. Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, Princeton. 1958, p. 40

to the straight path, the path of those whom You blessed, not of those who earned Your anger or went astray.' God says, 'This is for My servant and I bestow what he has asked for.' (6)

This *hadith* throws some light on the unusual greatness and effectiveness of this prayer. First, nothing can be better and more exalted than what is demanded in the prayer: the servant is asking from God guidance to the right path to reach Him. In other words, he is requesting God to show him the way to get closer to Him. Second, it starts with thanks-giving and those attributes of God which entitle him to His blessings. Third, by saying, 'We obey You and ask Your help alone' he puts himself completely in the hands of God. He has put his entire trust in Him and thrown himself at His door. He has cut all his relations and come to build only one relation, i.e., with God. There is no reason why his request should not be granted. The final words of the prayer provide the best intercession. The servant prays for guidance to God and requests to be granted the ability and power to tread that path which leads to Him. In these words, God has Himself taught man how to reach Him, get near to Him and open a dialogue with Him. (7)

7. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, op.cit, pp. 23-25.

إِذَا الصَّلَاةُ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

SECTION FOUR INDIVIDUAL (OR PERSONAL) BENEFITS

INDIVIDUAL (or Personal) BENEFITS

Strengthens Faith

Prayer is a constant reminder to the believer that he is a servant of God. It is the first thing he does in the morning before anything else and during the day at three regular intervals and the last thing before he goes to bed. This regular observance of prayer helps in strengthening one's faith in God. "It is but easy to understand how the daily prayers strengthen the foundation of your faith, prepare you for the observance of a life of virtue and obedience to God, and refresh that belief from which spring courage, sincerity, purposefulness, purity of heart, advancement of the soul, and enrichment of morals.

"Now see how this is achieved. You perform ablution and perform it in the way prescribed by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). You also say your prayers according to the instructions of the Prophet. Why do you do so? Simply because you believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and deem it your bounden duty to follow him ungrudgingly. Why don't you intentionally mis-recite the *Qur'an*? Isn't it because you regard the Book as the word of God and deem it a sin to deviate from its letters? In the prayer you recite many a thing quietly and if you do not recite them and make any deviation therefrom there is no one to check you. But you never do so intentionally. Why? Because you believe that God is ever watchful and He listens to all that you recite and is aware of things open and hidden. What makes you say your prayers at places where there is no one to ask you to offer them or even to see you offering them? Isn't it because of

1. Abul Ala Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, Beirut, 1970, pp. 133-134.

your belief that God is ever looking at you? What makes you leave your important business and other occupations and rush towards the mosque for prayers? What makes you terminate your sweet sleep in the early hours of the morning, to come to the mosque in the heat of the noon and to leave your evening entertainments for the sake of prayers? Is it anything other than your sense of duty - your realisation that you must fulfil your responsibility to your Lord, come what may?

"And why are you afraid of any mistake in prayer? Because your heart is filled with the fear of God and you know that you have to appear before Him on the Day of Judgement and give an account of your entire life. Now look! Can there be a better course of moral and spiritual training than prayers? It is this training which makes a man a perfect Muslim. It reminds him of his covenant with God, refreshes his faith in Him, keeps the belief in the Day of Judgement alive and ever present before his mind's eye. It makes him follow the Prophet and trains him in the observance of his duties.

This is indeed a strict training for conforming one's practice to one's ideals. Obviously if a man's consciousness of his duties towards his Creator is so acute that he prizes it above all worldly gains and he keeps refreshing it through prayers, he would certainly keep clean in all his dealings for, otherwise, he would certainly be inviting the displeasure of God which he had all along striven to avoid. He will abide by the law of God in the entire gamut of life in the same way as he follows it in the five prayers every day. This man can be relied upon in other fields of activity as well, for if the shadows of sin or deceit approach him, he will try to avoid them for fear of the Lord which would be ever present in his heart. And if even after such a vital training, a man misbehaves himself in other

fields of life and disobeys the Law of God, it can only be because of some intrinsic depravity of his self." 1.

This shows how prayer may help in strengthening faith in the heart of a believer. The greater the regularity and zeal with which prayer is offered, the stronger and firmer becomes the faith. This is why hypocrites find it difficult to offer prayer, especially at difficult times. According to Abu Hurairah, God's Messenger said, "No prayer is more burdensome to the hypocrites than the dawn and evening prayer. And Salman reported God's Messenger as saying, He who goes out early to morning prayer goes out with the standard of faith." (2)

It is extremely difficult to leave a warm bed in the early hours of the morning, especially in the winter months, to offer morning prayer, and those who do have really very strong faith. This is why God has mentioned the condition of the people of Hell in the Qur'an in these words, "We were not of those who prayed" (74:43). And again *surah Ma'un*, condemns the hypocrites in these words, "Woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers." (107:4-5) And again in *surah Nisa*, "When they stand up for prayer, they go reluctantly to it, merely to be seen by people, and they remember God but little." (4:142)

The Holy Prophet has told the believers to help their 'selves' with *sujud* (prayers) in strengthening their faith. Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself (in prayer), so make supplication often." He also reported the Messenger of God as saying, "When a man recited *As-Sajdah* (a *surah* of the *Qur'an*), the

devil retires, crying," Woe to me. The son of Adam has been commanded to prostrate himself and has done so, and will be rewarded with paradise; (2) According to Madan bin Talha, Thauban said that he asked God's Messenger to tell him something which could take him to paradise. God's Messenger said, " Make frequent prostration before God, for you will not make one prostration without God raising you a degree because of it and removing a sin from you because of it." (3)

Thus there is no doubt that prayer and its various postures (*qiy'am*, *ruku* and *sujud*) strengthen the faith of a believer and thereby lead him to the path of righteousness and of paradise.

Punctuality

Salat teaches strict punctuality. A believer has to offer his *salat* five times daily at appointed times. He has to learn to be punctual at every *salat*, otherwise he will lose the benefit of congregational prayer. This training is constant and continuous; you cannot relax for a long interval because you are reminded every few hours, especially after noon prayer (*salat zuhr*). You have to be ready all the time for the call to prayer.

You cannot postpone it, partly because it repeats five times every day and partly because it must be performed in congregation, as far as possible, at stated times: "Establish regular *salat*, for the *salat* is enjoined on believers at stated times." (4:103). This regular attendance at the congregational *salat* every day is bound to make a believer very punctual in his life. It will make him realise the importance of time and punctuality. It will show him how it saves wastage of a lot of time and unnecessary

3. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1., 183 (Muslim transmitted it).

work. He will gradually become regular in his dealings with other people and try to stick to a timetable in everything. He will be very punctual in every area of his life and will stick to his appointments under all circumstances.

This punctuality in *salat* has far-reaching effects on the life of an individual. He learns to do things at proper times. He neither postpones his work till tomorrow nor does he leave it unfinished. He does his job properly and finishes it right on time. Wherever and in whatever position he may be, he is always punctual and hard-working. A society composed of such individuals is bound to be an exemplary society for the rest of the world.

Sense of Duty and Responsibility

It develops a sense of duty and responsibility in an individual. A believer who offers his *salat* regularly feels a sense of duty to God in all his actions. When he is fully convinced that he owes something to God and that it is his duty to worship and obey his Creator and Master, he will naturally establish regular *salat*. He will always endeavour to perform his *salat* regularly and on time.

The *salat* will make him so dutiful and obedient to God that he will gradually become aware of his duty towards his fellow-beings. He will try to be good and helpful to others. He will become a very responsible citizen and, indeed, an asset to any society.

An individual cannot perform his duties properly and efficiently unless he is fully conscious of his obligations to other individuals and society. An individual who knows not what his duty is and what he stands for, can hardly be expected to serve other individuals or society. Similarly an individual with

defective training knows his duty and is fully conscious of it, but does not care to fulfil his obligations. An individual of such character can hardly be relied upon to do anything or be capable of doing any good work.

It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that an individual who is appointed to a responsible post should be given adequate training to make him conscious of his duty and responsibility. This would not only produce the right men for the right job but also provide a standard for selecting the right men and rejecting the unsuitable ones.

Look at the army and its strict discipline. The soldiers have to get up early in the morning for physical training, do regular parade, have their meal at fixed times and go to bed at fixed times. They have to keep their uniform neat and clean, even polish up their boots and buttons almost daily. Why all this strict discipline in their life? The object of all this training is to develop in them a sense of duty and a habit of doing everything in a systematic way. It also provides a daily test of their suitability for the job they are being trained for. The lazy, irresponsible and inefficient ones are gradually noticed and rejected because they are not fit for the job and cannot be relied upon in critical moments in a war.

Armies prepare their soldiers under strict discipline to fight the enemy and defend the country against possible aggression which may or may not come. But a soldier of Islam is constantly fighting the evil forces around him. Life for him is a duty. He has to fight a constant battle to see that the Commandments of God are obeyed.

Islam is not merely an ideology but a practical religion and a complete way of life. It covers every

aspect of human life. Therefore, for a soldier of Islam, it is a twenty-four-hour service without any leave or holiday or rest. A Muslim is engaged in the service of God all the time without any break. Now imagine, for such service, what strict discipline, hard training and difficult tests are needed; mere verbal belief in its creed is not enough. Declaration of belief in its creed is a mere sign of candidacy for entering its service. After declaration of candidacy, it is absolutely necessary that the applicant should be brought under a strict code of discipline. He can become a useful member of this service only after successfully living under this discipline for some time. If he is not ready to give himself up to this discipline, or if he does not attend the call of duty, or if he does not find any willingness in him to obey the Commandment of God, he is totally useless for Islam. Neither God nor religion need the services of such a useless person.

The prayer is prescribed five times a day for this very purpose. It gives a call five times daily so that soldiers of Islam should come running from all directions to show their sense of duty to God and His Commandments. Prayer, on the one hand, is training for the soldiers of God and on the other, it separates true believers from hypocrites. Individuals who regularly come out at its call and act according to its code of discipline gradually show a sense of duty, discipline and readiness to obey the Commands of God. On the other hand, those who stay at home and refuse to obey its call prove, by their action, that either they do not realise their duty or, if they do, they are not prepared to do it or, possibly, that they do not recognise the Authority which has prescribed it as a duty, or that they are so dull that they are not willing to obey the very first Commandment of their own Lord and Master. (4)

4. Abul Ala Maududi, *Khutbat*, pp. 142-44.

If they have faith, they are not true to their conviction and lack the quality and ability to act according to what they believe in to be true and right. In that case, they are so irresponsible and inefficient that they are unsuitable to be members of an Islamic society. This is why *salat* is burdensome on those who are not prepared to obey God: "Seek God's help with patient perseverance and *salat*; it is indeed hard except to those who bring a lowly spirit." (11:45).

The one who feels prayer a burden is himself a testimony to the fact that he is not willing to submit himself to the Command of God. And this is why it is said that if they repent from unbelief and establish regular prayer and give *zakat*, they are your brothers in Islam: "But (even so), if they repent, establish prayer, and pay regular *zakat*, they are your brothers in Faith." (9:11) This means that no one can enter in to the brotherhood of Islam without establishing prayer. In fact, the *Qur'an* is a guidance only for those who believe in the unseen and establish prayer: "This is a Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear God, who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayer." (11:2-3)

And the quality of the hypocrites is that they are heedless of their *salat*: "So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayer." (107:4-5)

If ever they offer their prayer, they offer it very unwillingly: "When they stand up to prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men." (4:142)

Training in Self Discipline

The prayer provides a wonderful programme for training individuals for the service of Islam and humanity.

This programme has five important ingredients: First, it engraves in the mind of an individual that he is not an independent being but a servant of the Creator and the Lord of the Universe and that he has to live and work on earth in this capacity. Second, he is made to realise his duty to his Lord in this capacity and is provided with opportunities to form a habit of fulfilling his duty. Third, it helps to distinguish between a dutiful servant and a rebel and, consequently, dispenses with the latter type of individual. Fourth, it tries to instil the complete ideology of Islam in the mind of an individual and makes him so firm that he becomes a man with a very strong and unshakeable character. Fifth, it builds in him sufficient strength of character to enable him to do what he thinks right according to his own belief and knowledge. He is also able to utilise all the energies of his body and soul in the fulfilment of his mission.

Great care is taken in the development of individual personality so that no weakness in character is left unnoticed or uncared for, as a result of which an individual may not be able to do, owing to pressures from within and without, what he thinks is right. We often see that an individual believes in the rightness of one thing but owing to weakness of character and to the persistent demands of the desires of his self, or other motives, acts in a different way.

Islam trains each individual through the institution of prayer in such a way that no such weakness in character is left unrectified. The *salat* becomes obligatory on every individual, man or woman, at the age of twelve. And this duty is not forgiven under any circumstances except for women in a condition of menstruation. Whether you are on journey, or sick, or fighting against your enemy, you have to fulfil your obligation of prayer. If you are so

ill and weak that you cannot get up, offer your prayer in a sitting position; if you cannot sit, offer it in a lying position, and if you can't even move your arms and legs, then offer it by signs. If water is not available, you do *tayyammum* instead of the ablution. If you can't find the correct direction of the *qibla*, offer your prayer in the probable direction. When the time for prayer comes, a believer is duty bound, under all circumstances, to offer his prayer.

This strict regularity and discipline of prayer is a unique example and wonderful programme of preparing individuals for the service of good and justice in the world. There is no social or religious system, other than Islam, which has such a perfect organisation to prepare its constituent parts individually for the service of the community. Most of the social systems lay all the emphasis on the formation of the community and on the external pressures which bind the individuals to the group, and no, or very little, attention is paid to the training of individuals from within for the basic needs of the community.

The community is like a wall which is built of bricks. If the individual bricks used are not strong and solid, the wall as a whole will remain weak. Similarly, if there is weakness in the character of individuals, if their individual ideas are not in line with the main principles of the community, and if they have a tendency, in practice, to go against the cardinal principles of society, they cannot be kept together for long merely by external pressures and coercive methods. Sooner or later, such a society will disintegrate and break up.

The institution of prayer helps to remove such weakness in individual character and strengthens the wall of the Islamic community with the cement of

discipline, obedience and love. (5)

This regular training helps to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the members of the community and renders them like a solid rock against their enemies. They are mild and compassionate to each other but stand as a rock against their enemies: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, but compassionate amongst each other" (48:29).

The Holy Prophet has described the qualities of the believers in these words, "A Muslim is brother of a Muslim, he will neither betray him nor lie to him, nor leave him in distress." And Abu Musa Asha'ira reported God's Messenger as saying, "A Muslim is like a wall for the other Muslims as its one part supports the other part." (6) And according to Anas bin Malik, God's Messenger said, "None amongst you believes till one likes for his brother or for his neighbour that which he loves for himself." (7)

These sayings of the Prophet show that Islam's approach to life is very realistic. Though he alone is accountable for his sins on the Day of Judgement, he is not isolated from other members of the community." The distress which vexes him is not his own only, it is that of his brethren as well; the redemption for which he longs is also the redemption of his people, his fellow believers, nay, the entire humanity. It is the duty of a Muslim not only to lead a peaceful life himself but also to create a social atmosphere where every man feels secure from the tyranny of the oppressor." (7)

5. Abul Ala Maududi, op.cit.

6. *Tirmizi*, p.823

7. *Sahih Muslim*, Vol.1, p.31

Character-Building

The practical success of an individual depends on his perseverance and hard work. A man of character does his work persistently and constantly all his life. This is called strength of character. And anything which trains individuals in strengthening their character needs to be done regularly every day. Daily prayer is a duty which is performed with strict regularity five times a day. That is to say perseverance and persistence are its essential requisites and there is no other means better than prayer to build up and develop high moral qualities in an individual. The *Holy Qur'an* praises this quality of the companions of the Holy Messenger in these words: "Those who remain steadfast to their prayer." (70:23)

And the Holy Messenger is reported to have said that "The dearest act in the eyes of God is that which is done constantly, even though it be small." (8) And obviously no act is done with such strict persistency and regularity as daily prayer. This great discipline with which prayer is offered regularly creates a very high quality, known as *Taqwa*, in the character of an individual. And this is, in fact, the essence of the Islamic character.

Taqwa is a term with every wide meanings and covers almost every aspect of human life. The *Holy Qur'an* divides, in principle, human modes of thinking and acting into two main categories. There is the man who thinks that there is no supreme authority other than the worldly powers and spends his life thinking that he is not responsible to any super-natural sovereign. The other type of man thinks himself subservient and answerable to a super-natural sovereign, Who knows the hidden as well as the apparent.

He spends his life thinking that one day he will have to give an account of all his omissions and commissions to the Supreme Being.

The first type of man regards this life as the real life and considers its gains as real gains and its losses as real losses. Therefore worldly gain and loss is his main criterion for determining what to do and what not to do. The other man considers worldly life as a primary stage in the real life of man and the gains and losses which appear at this stage as only temporary. He decides his line of action on the basis of his permanent gains and losses, which will appear in the real life after death.

The first man considers moral and spiritual values insignificant as compared to material benefits and does not attach much importance to moral and spiritual loss in relation to his material losses. The other man regards moral and spiritual values as more important than material benefits and their loss more damaging than material losses.

The first kind of man does not follow any permanent moral code of life but invents his own moral code according to the needs and demands of time and place. The other type of man follows a permanent moral code of life which he is not free to alter or change to suit his own desires or ends.

The first way of thinking and line of action is called, in modern terminology, materialism, utilitarianism, pragmatism or opportunism, but the *Holy Qur'an* calls it '*fajir*' and the second way of thinking and doing '*taqwa*'. These two ways of thinking and doing are diametrically opposed to one another. And this difference is related not only to individual life but also to social life. A community which is composed of *fajir* individuals, or the majority of whom are *fajir*, and which is led by *fajir* leaders,

will have a culture of *fajireen* (immoral people). Its social life, its morality, its economics, its system of education, its politics, its international relations, in short, every aspect of its life will be influenced by *fujur* (immorality). Even if there were a few, or even many, individuals who are above selfishness and material motives, it would not in any way affect or alter the national policies which are basically materialistic, opportunistic, pragmatic or utilitarian.

Similarly, *taqwa* is not merely an individual thing. When any community is composed of *muttaqi* people, or the majority of whom are *muttaqi*, and is led by such people, the whole social attitude in every possible way will be different from that described above. Such a community would not determine its policy by temporary and occasional gains but would follow a permanent moral code of life for a definite unalterable objective irrespective of material gain or loss. The prayer, through *taqwa*, helps to create such people. It prepares individual character in a way which is fully in accord with the Islamic way of life; in other words, it makes man an obedient servant of God.

Every community or group has a system of training for its individuals according to the nature of the work it intends to do, or the objective which it wants to attain. For example, the object of the civil service of the modern state is to maintain the administration of the country. Therefore all emphasis in the training of civil servants is on faithfulness to the Government in power and on developing the administrative qualities. It is not concerned with *taqwa* or *taharat*. Any man, however corrupt or immoral in his private life, can enter the civil service and achieve success, for the Government is not concerned with the principle of justice and truthfulness in administration or politics. The same

is the case with military organisations. Soldiers are trained to kill the enemy without being killed. They are not taught any high moral principles of life. If they obey the discipline of the army, they are good soldiers, even though they may be drunkards, adulterers, cheats and aggressors.

Islam, on the other hand, intends to prepare a group of people whose objective is to establish justice and goodness in society and destroy evil and injustice. Every individual has strictly to follow its permanent moral principles in politics or economics, trade or industry, war or peace, internal or international relations, in short, in every aspect of his cultural as well as social life. Islam has to establish the Law of God on earth and, therefore every member of this society, from an ordinary worker to the head of the state, is prepared under a system of training which develops in them a character suited to its objective.

Character-building is the basis of Islam. It starts with belief in One God. Every individual believes in Him and obeys Him. He regards Him as his Sovereign and Lord and believes that he is answerable to Him for all his actions on the Day of Judgement. He knows that God watches him in light and in darkness, knows what is apparent and what is hidden, and even knows what goes on in one's mind, conscious or unconscious. Nothing can remain hidden from His knowledge.

An individual may save himself, by various deceitful means, from the punishment of this world, but he cannot save himself from the punishment of God. Piety and goodness can be lost and go unrewarded in this world and sometimes even rewarded with evil. But that is not possible with God. Every good (or evil) is permanent with Him and will be rewarded with good (or evil).

This Faith prepares an individual to follow and obey the Commandments of God and checks him from following his self or the greed for unfair and unlawful gains, or adopting immoral means to achieve his ends. This ideology is strong enough to keep an individual on the straight path of truth and justice and high morality and make him participate in the betterment of humanity. The prayer reminds an individual of his responsibility again and again and helps to strengthen his determination to achieve his objective. The very thought of prayer in man starts building up his character on Islamic lines and then every movement and every action in prayer is so arranged that it helps in building up an Islamic character.

When you want to offer prayer, you see that you and your clothes are not unclean; if you are without ablution, you perform ablution. Why do you think of these things? If you offer your prayer without cleaning your body or clothes, or without purification, nobody will notice it and nobody can know it. You do all these things because you fear God and you believe that He knows everything and that nothing is hidden from Him. This belief makes you follow and obey very strictly the rules and regulations of purification and ablution regarding prayer. No worldly power could ever force you to follow this drill with such thoroughness and sincerity.

Then you begin your prayer and try to perform every act, e.g., *qiy'am*, *ruku*, *sujud*, *qaadah* etc., and recite the *Qur'an*, in the manner taught by the Holy Messenger. Why you do all this in extreme solemnity and reverence? You offer prayer quietly and none can know if you do not recite anything, or say something else, or just read the verses of some poet. Whose fear or love makes you so sincere and punctual in performing prayer perfectly?

Again the times of prayer meet with various conditions: sometimes you are at home; sometimes in your office and at work; at other times you are on a journey or busy in your recreational pursuits; sometimes it is night and very cold and you do not want to get out of bed; sometimes it is hot and you do not like to go out in the burning heat of the sun. In short, who brings you, under all these varying conditions, to Prayer? If it is not belief in God and in His comprehensive Knowledge, or fear of His Anger, or love for His Pleasure, what is it?

Then think of what is recited in prayer. Every single word, from the beginning to the end, is full of the basic ideology and spirit of Islam. When you recite this again and again five times daily it refreshes your belief and strengthens your *imān*. All this helps to build up the superstructure of Islamic character. As you go through each and every act of prayer and how it is performed, you will notice the wonderful spirit with which Islam tries to train its civil service, its army and every member of society, and the high moral qualities it likes to develop in them. (9)

Its workers have *taqwa* and fear of God along with the strict discipline of society. They not only administer the affairs of the world, but also try to establish truth and justice in the land. If you look at it in this way, you will notice that there is no training system other than prayer, or better than prayer, which can achieve this objective of Islam. This is why the *Holy Qur'an* says: "Establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." (29:59).

This is why, since ancient times, prayer has been an indispensable part of any Islamic movement.

This Faith prepares an individual to follow and obey the Commandments of God and checks him from following his self or the greed for unfair and unlawful gains, or adopting immoral means to achieve his ends. This ideology is strong enough to keep an individual on the straight path of truth and justice and high morality and make him participate in the betterment of humanity. The prayer reminds an individual of his responsibility again and again and helps to strengthen his determination to achieve his objective. The very thought of prayer in man starts building up his character on Islamic lines and then every movement and every action in prayer is so arranged that it helps in building up an Islamic character.

When you want to offer prayer, you see that you and your clothes are not unclean; if you are without ablution, you perform ablution. Why do you think of these things? If you offer your prayer without cleaning your body or clothes, or without purification, nobody will notice it and nobody can know it. You do all these things because you fear God and you believe that He knows everything and that nothing is hidden from Him. This belief makes you follow and obey very strictly the rules and regulations of purification and ablution regarding prayer. No worldly power could ever force you to follow this drill with such thoroughness and sincerity.

Then you begin your prayer and try to perform every act, e.g., *qiy'am*, *ruku*, *sujud*, *qaadah* etc., and recite the *Qur'an*, in the manner taught by the Holy Messenger. Why you do all this in extreme solemnity and reverence? You offer prayer quietly and none can know if you do not recite anything, or say something else, or just read the verses of some poet. Whose fear or love makes you so sincere and punctual in performing prayer perfectly?

Again the times of prayer meet with various conditions: sometimes you are at home; sometimes in your office and at work; at other times you are on a journey or busy in your recreational pursuits; sometimes it is night and very cold and you do not want to get out of bed; sometimes it is hot and you do not like to go out in the burning heat of the sun. In short, who brings you, under all these varying conditions, to Prayer? If it is not belief in God and in His comprehensive Knowledge, or fear of His Anger, or love for His Pleasure, what is it?

Then think of what is recited in prayer. Every single word, from the beginning to the end, is full of the basic ideology and spirit of Islam. When you recite this again and again five times daily it refreshes your belief and strengthens your *iman*. All this helps to build up the superstructure of Islamic character. As you go through each and every act of prayer and how it is performed, you will notice the wonderful spirit with which Islam tries to train its civil service, its army and every member of society, and the high moral qualities it likes to develop in them. (9)

Its workers have *taqwa* and fear of God along with the strict discipline of society. They not only administer the affairs of the world, but also try to establish truth and justice in the land. If you look at it in this way, you will notice that there is no training system other than prayer, or better than prayer, which can achieve this objective of Islam. This is why the *Holy Qur'an* says: "Establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." (29:59).

This is why, since ancient times, prayer has been an indispensable part of any Islamic movement.

SELF-CONTROL

Along with character-building, prayer also develops the power of self-control without which the former can not be fully achieved. Character-building by itself can make an individual disciplined and cultured through the training of his human ego. But if the trained ego has no practical control over the powers of body and mind, which are its instruments, then the purpose of its training, i.e., right conduct, cannot be achieved. For example, man combines the powers of both a motor and a driver. This combination can work rightly only if the motor and its powers are under the complete control of the driver and the latter is properly educated and trained and fully knows his way.

If you have trained the driver, but the steering, brakes and accelerator are not under his control, or only partially under his control, then the driver will not drive the motor but the motor will drive him. And as the motor knows only how to run and has no sense of direction, it will take the driver in any direction and may even crash against some thing. In this example, the powers of body and mind and the desires of the self are like a motor, with the ego as the driver. These powers are as ignorant as the motor of steel but, unlike the latter, they are alive. They have desires, emotions and objectives and always try to lead the driver.

The purpose of the teachings of all the Messengers is to train the driver in such a way that he does not let the motor ride on him but himself rides on it and leads it safely to the right destination. For this purpose, it is not enough that the driver knows his way and how to drive the motor efficiently, it is also essential that steering, brakes and accelerator should always be properly fixed and fully under the grip of the driver, because this wild motor tries to get control over its drivers.

The prayer is prescribed to tame these wild powers and desires of the body, mind and self in order that they may remain under the control of the human ego. Conditions of purification, punctuality, physical movements and praises of God in prayer all exert a tremendous influence on the powers and desires of body, mind and self and provide them ample opportunities of discipline and proper education, whereby they tend gradually to lose their wildness and come under the control and guidance of the driver. The daily practice helps to break the roughness of these powers and make them co-operate with the driver. It constantly tightens the brakes, lubricates steering and the accelerator and strengthens the grip and control of the driver.

Early in the morning, you are called to the *salat-al-fajr*, when you are warm and cosy in your bed. You don't like to come out and your self advises you to stay in bed and enjoy sleep but your ego reminds you of the time of the prayer. If you have contacted your wife, you have to take a bath. If it is winter and there is no hot water, you have to take bath or do ablution with cold water. There is a struggle between the self and the ego. If you obey your self, your motor rides on you, but if, on the other hand, you fulfil your obligations of prayer, you ride on your motor.

The same thing is experienced in prayer at other times at noon, afternoon, evening and at night, the self finds some excuse of work, or material gain, or loss, or other engagements, or worldly pursuits. The self is always looking for occasions when it can find some weakness in you and overpower you. The prayer comes at every occasion to awaken and strengthen your will power to resist the temptation of the self. It cautions you every time to tighten your grip on the steering and control the movements of your motor so that it may not overpower you.

This battle is daily fought at different times and under different conditions and in different ways. Sometimes at

home, sometimes on a journey, sometimes in summer and sometimes in winter; sometimes during rest and sometimes during work; sometimes on holiday and sometimes in grief and sufferings. In these conditions, there is a struggle between the demands of the self and the call for prayer. You are constantly and continually put to the test; if you obey your self, you are defeated and your own servant becomes your master. You have given yourself over to a blind and ignorant motor which will take you anywhere and may end in a crash while you are helpless. But if you fulfil the demand of prayer, you break the wild force of the motor and ride on it safely. You become strong enough to drive it according to your knowledge, training and will. (1)

This is why the *Holy Qur'an* says that the immediate and unavoidable consequence of the cessation of prayer is that man becomes a slave to the desires and sensuous pleasures of life and strays away from the right path and thereafter falls into the valleys of ignorance and darkness. (19:59)

Patience and Perseverance

Prayer develops in man such qualities as patience, endurance, contentment and perseverance, which are needed in the service of justice and goodness and, above all, are a source of strength in the face of hardships and difficulties. The Holy Messenger is told to be patient in the face of hardships and to establish *Salat* to strengthen his power of resistance against evil forces: "Therefore be patient with what they say, and celebrate (constantly) the praises of Thy Lord (through *Salat*)" (20:130). Here the Holy Messenger is told to tolerate every kind of hardship and oppression of his enemies. He is further asked to establish prayer to strengthen his power of patience and endurance. "This is because all good men must be patient with what seems to them evil around them. That does not mean that they should sit still and do nothing to destroy evil."

1. Abul Ala Maududi, op.cit.

for the fight against evil is one of the cardinal points in Islam. What they are told is that they must not be impatient. They must pray to God and commune with Him, so that their patience and faith may be strengthened, and that they may be able the better to grapple with evil. For they thus not only get strength but inward spiritual joy." (2)

Besides, prayer will change the entire outlook of the individual, it will alter the standard of his values, it will change the centre of his thoughts and ideas. He will be contented with his meagre hard-earned livelihood and will prefer that goodness which is obtained through Faith and *taqwa* to that luxurious life obtained through evil and immoral means. This is the miracle of prayer, that it gives contentment and satisfaction to the individual: "Bear, then, with patience, all that they say, and celebrate the praises of thy Lord (prayer)" (50:39). And again the Holy Messenger is asked to tell his people to get strength from prayer: "Enjoin prayer on your people and be constant therein." (20:132)

The *Holy Qur'an* repeatedly advises people to obtain help and strength from prayer in all their troubles. The Arabic word *sabr* implies many shades of meaning, which it is impossible to comprehend in one English word. It implies (i) patience, in the sense of being thorough, not hasty; (ii) Patient perseverance, constancy, endurance, steadfastness, firmness of purpose; (iii) systematic as opposed to spasmodic or haphazard action; (iv) a cheerful attitude of resignation and understanding in sorrow, defeat, or suffering, as opposed to murmuring or rebellion, but saved from mere passivity or listlessness by the element of constancy or steadfastness." (3)

The real meaning of the word *sabr* is to check, that is to say, to protect the 'self' from confusion, disappointment and grief and keep it on its right course. The *Holy Qur'an*

2. *Holy Quran*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 818

3. *Holy Quran*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 28.

has used this word in a much finer and purer sense. Usually it is used to convey the meaning that the servant of God is standing by his covenant with his Lord with complete satisfaction of his heart and has full confidence in His promises; and that he is fully prepared to face the difficulties.

Generally speaking, people use the word *sabr* as meaning weakness, lack of strength and disability, but in fact it is never used in this sense in Arabic. It is the basis of determination and strength, as often used in the Arabic language. The Holy *Qur'an* has also elaborated its meaning in *Surah Baqarah*. "And show fortitude in hardships and adversity and in the struggle (between the truth and falsehood)" (2:177).

In this verse, light is shown on three aspects of *sabr*: (i) hardship, calamity, poverty, etc, (ii) Adversity, distress, disease etc, and (iii) fight, struggle between Truth and falsehood. In fact, these three are the root cause of all trouble and hardships. (4) "The *Qur'an* uses this word to express that fortitude, that moral strength, that firmness of purpose and decision, that determination and that moral discipline and self control which enable a person to proceed with patience and courage in the face of afflictions, privations and temptations or the way he chooses in accordance with the dictates of his conscience." (5) The believers are told to seek God's help through prayer: "O ye who believe; seek help with patient perseverance and prayer, for God is with those who patiently persevere." (11:153) And again: "Nay seek (God's) help with patient perseverance and prayer. (11:45)

Believers are told here to seek God's help in hardship and troubles with patience, for then and only

4. The Meaning of the *Qur'an*, Vol.1., p.76.

5. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.1., p.144.

then can they succeed in their mission and defeat the evil designs of their enemies. It is absolutely necessary for believers to be patient and steadfast in their fight against the evil forces of *kufir* in order to be successful.

They must practise self-restraint in their struggle against evil and follow reason and restrain fear, anger and desires so that their struggle may reach a successful end. If they discipline themselves for the success of their ideology, they will not only reap the multifarious worldly benefits but will also get a higher reward in that God will be with them. And this promise opens the way for all sorts of spiritual blessings and well-being.

In all these verses of the Holy *Qur'an* quoted above, patience is followed by prayer, which obviously suggests that the latter is the most effective and successful means of achieving the former. If you want to develop your powers of patience and perseverance, you are advised to seek help through the establishment of the institution of prayer. *Salat* has the potentialities and ingredients that are needed in the formation and development of *sabr* (patience and perseverance). God has, therefore, advised the believers again and again to establish prayer in order to strengthen their power of patience and perseverance.

Sabr, in fact, signifies that strength of will, firmness of determination and organisation of desires of the self which enable a man to continue to tread the path of righteousness in face of internal carnal evocations and external difficulties and hardships. God wants believers to develop such qualities in themselves to defeat internal and external forces hostile to the establishment of truth and justice in society. As it is a very hard and nerve-wrecking job, they are advised to strengthen themselves with

outside help through the establishment of prayer. The prayer will assist them in developing and strengthening their powers of resistance and restraint on the one hand, and perseverance and steadfastness on the other.

In the above-mentioned two verses of *Surah Baqarah*, believers are advised to seek strength against hardship and adversity, in the struggle between the Truth and falsehood through prayer. The recipe against all kinds of hardships consists of two things i.e. '*sabr*' and 'prayer'. The attainment of these two ingredients lessens the hard struggle of the 'self' against its deadliest enemies, from within and without. *Sabr* is related to character-building, while *salat* is a kind of worship. If a man does not possess the quality to face hardship and obstacles in life, he cannot achieve any higher objective, but this quality of facing difficulties in life does not come easily in man but needs hard and continuous practice. Prayer is the best prescription for it. If man resolves to follow the right course (of Islam) and remembers God and seeks His help through prayer, his strength to face the hardships and adversities of life is increased a thousand-fold. No calamity or grief will ever weaken the strength of his determination; the constant relationship with God established through prayer always saves a believer from possible default or weakness in difficult circumstances. (6).

This prescription for facing hardship in the form of prayer is a hard task for a disbeliever who does not believe in the Day of Judgement. As for a true believer, it is a joyful duty, nay, it rather becomes hard for him to leave prescribed prayer. (7)

6. *Tadubbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.1., pp.146-148.

7. The Meaning of the *Qur'an*, Vol.1, p.77.

Believers are commanded to adopt *sabr* because no nation can keep the covenant of God without developing this quality, and they are also commanded to establish regular prayer, because it serves as a means to create *sabr* in them and develop this quality to its perfection. Besides, prayer is a combination of remembrance (*dhikr*) of and gratitude to God and a preface to all covenants which have been made between God and His servants. The establishment of this institution opens the way to the fuller and nobler life of nation.

In *Surah Baqarah*, prayer is mentioned twice in the three verses 43-45, which seems very significant. On the first occasion (43) it is mentioned, it stands as the first clause of the covenant between God and His servants after the declaration of Faith in God and His Oneness. On the second occasion (45) it is mentioned because it is the fountain-head, the key, the helper and the means of acquisition of all piety and goodness. In other words, the Islamic *Shariah* starts with prayer and its establishment, and its survival also depends on prayer. On the first occasion, its essential requisite is *zakat* while on the second occasion its companion is *sabr*. In fact when *din* (religion) comes out of the stage of Faith and enters into the practical life, its first step is prayer.

And when the struggle starts for the establishment of *din* and the renewal of the Divine Covenant, again the prayer occupies the most important place. Undoubtedly prayer is the fountain-head of all Divine Commandments and occupies the most important place after Faith in Divine Covenants between God and man. The Covenant of the people of Israel is mentioned in the *Qur'an* in these words: "God did take a covenant from the children of Israel and appointed twelve captains among them. And God said, 'I am with you, if you establish prayer, pay *zakat* and believe

in My Messengers, and support them, and give a generous loan to God, I shall surely wipe out your evils from you, and admit you into gardens under which canals flow. But after this whoso from you adopted the way of disbelief has indeed gone astray from the right Way." (2:12-13)

The *Holy Qur'an* refers here to the Covenant which was made with the people of Israel, and the first thing mentioned in it is the prayer. Similarly, when the *Qur'an* mentions the downfall of Israel, it mentions that the first thing they lost and forgot was the prayer, which led to their degeneration: "Then there came after them those degenerate people, who lost prayer and followed after lusts; soon then, they shall face destruction. (19:59)."

And again the *Holy Qur'an* mentions on another occasion that the first thing required for the maintenance of the Divine Covenant is the establishment and preservation of the prayer: (8) "As to those who hold fast by the Book and establish regular prayer, surely We will not let go to waste the reward of such righteous people." (7:170).

The whole history of man stands witness to the fact that *sabr* and *salat* (prayer) are the means to success in the struggle for the establishment of *din* on the earth. It seems that God has based victory in this struggle on two things, *sabr* and *salat* (prayer). Musa (Moses) advised his people to seek help from these two things in their struggle to establish *din* on earth: "Moses said to his people, Pray for help from God (through *salat*) and show fortitude *sabr*. For the earth belongs to God, and He gives it as a heritage to those of His servants whom He pleases." (7:128).

Though there is no mention of the word *salat*, one can understand that seeking help from God clearly refers to the prayer, because it is the only means of seeking assistance from God. It is elaborated in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*, where the believers are advised to seek help in their struggle from these two things: "O Believers, seek help with *sabr* and *salat* for God is with those who show *sabr*. And do not say of those who are slain in the way of God, "They are dead." In fact they are alive but you do not understand that life. We will surely put you to trial by involving you in fear and hunger, by causing loss of property, life and earnings. And give good tidings to those who remain *sabir* in these trials. When a misfortune comes to them, they say, "We are God's and we shall certainly return to Him. Then the Lord will bestow great Blessing and Mercy upon them. Such are the people who are rightly guided." (2:153-157)

The same advice was given to the holy Prophet again and again in the Makkan period when he started his campaign of *Dawat-e-Islam* and met with strong opposition from all sides.

The Holy Prophet was asked to show *sabr* (be steadfast) and establish *salat* (prayer) to face the forces of opposition. "Now await with *sabr* (patience) the Command of your Lord; for surely you are in Our eyes. And celebrate the praises of your Lord (establish prayer) when you rise up from sleep (in the early morning)." (52:48)

And in *Surah Taha*: "Therefore show *sabr* (be patient) with what they say, and celebrate constantly the praises of your Lord, before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and celebrate them for part of the hours of night, and at the sides of the day, that you may have spiritual joy (i.e., five daily prayers)." (20:130)

These verses clearly show that *sabr* and *salat* are the two weapons God has given to believers in their struggle against the forces of evil and falsehood. A cursory study of the nature of these weapons reveals a remarkable coordination between them. Both provide nourishment and strength to one another: *sabr* (patience) strengthens *salat* (prayer) and *salat* (prayer) provides nourishment and strength to *sabr*. As has been explained before, *salat* is a nerve-wrecking exercise which needs lot of patience on the part of a believer. Unless one is equipped with the quality of patience (*sabr*), constant observance of daily *salat* at the proper times would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. In this respect, *sabr* strengthen *salat*.

In the same way, *sabr* (patience), which enables one to defend one's ideology and objective, can not be acquired without some strong support. And if there is any strong support it must be that of God which can be best acquired through *salat*. This is why the *Holy Qur'an* has said, "Show *sabr* (be patient) and your *sabr* is but from God." (16:127)

To stick to one's ideology in great hardship and troubles and not to let one's courage falter is a great quality without which an individual cannot improve his image nor any nation achieve anything. This is why nations devise various plans to develop this quality among their people to arouse feelings of individual fame and reputation or national honour and prestige. There is no doubt that these things do arouse feelings and provide a stimulus for action but their effect is temporary, like the intoxication of alcoholic drinks. On the other hand, religion trains and educates a man's determination and courage in a way that provides him with a right criterion and guidance for every problem of his life and insists on him following it. Along with this training and guidance, it links him through

salat (prayer) with the Creator of the Universe and thereby gives him a spiritual objective, so that he says, "Truly my prayer and sacrifice, my life and my death are all for God, the Sustainer of the World." (6:162) Thus the spirit which this training can generate among individuals to uphold the truth and fight against the forces of falsehood can never be developed by national slogans or the attraction of individual rewards.

In this respect, it may be remembered that whenever *salat* is mentioned in the struggle for establishing *din* (religion) on the earth, *sabr* (patience) is mentioned before *salat*. This points to the fact that the first requisite in the struggle to establish Truth and defeat falsehood is courage and steadfastness. If a man establishes regular prayer, it will sharpen his fortitude and courage and fill his heart with faith and determination. (9)

A careful study of the verses which insist that the believers seek help with *sabr* and *salat* in their struggle to establish *din* (religion) on the earth shows, first that *salat* in this context does not merely mean five daily prayers but includes late night (*tahajjud*) and optional (*nawafil*) prayers as well. For in fact, it is these prayers that create and develop in a believer a spirit and determination which overpower and defeat the obstacles in the struggle for Truth. With the help of these prayers he builds a strong relationship with God which never fails him even in the most difficult situation. These prayers also take him to that position of nearness to God which guarantee His help, as mentioned in this verse of the *Holy Qur'an* (2:153) "God is with those who are steadfast (*sabir*)."

Second, *salat* is the greatest outward expression of

remembrance, *dhikr* and thankfulness (*shukr*) in all the forms of worship (*ibadah*). The *Holy Qur'an* has said in various ways that real objective of *salat* is remembrance of God and thanksgiving to Him. A little thought will show that the believers' Covenant with God that 'you remember Me and I will remember you, and give thanks to Me and be not ungrateful' (2:152), can be effectively fulfilled only through *salat* because it is the best means of remembrance of Him.

Third, *salat* is needed to attain steadfastness and fortitude in the way of *dawat-i-din* (propagation of Islam) and *Iqamat-i-din* (establishment of religion of Islam). The real blessing or benefit of *salat* is experienced, when one maintains it regularly, during the struggle between the forces of Truth and falsehood. One who never fights against the forces of evil and falsehood will find this useful weapon becoming rather blunt.

Fourth, after seeking help from *sabr* and *salat*, in this verse it is said that 'God is with those who are steadfast (*sabir*), and not that God is with those who establish *salat* and show patience (*sabr*). According to Hameed ud Din Farrahi, this is because God's presence and company in *salat* is so obvious that it was unnecessary to show it. The thing that needed elaboration was that when a man remains steadfast in the struggle of *dawat-i-Haq* (propagation of Truth) and establishes *salat* to acquire steadfastness, God is with him.

Fifth the promise of God's Company and help for those who remain steadfast in their struggle is not an ordinary thing. In fact, in these two words is hidden a world of good tidings for those people. Just imagine, the real Sovereign and Creator of the Universe, the Owner of all power and strength: when He is backing someone who can defeat him?(10)

10. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.2., pp.334-336.

When Pharoah began to oppress Bani Israel and kill their male children in order to destroy their nation, Prophet Musa (Moses) asked his people to pray for God's help in these words: "Pray for help from God and show patience and steadfastness (*sabr*). For the earth belongs to God. He gives it as a heritage to those of His servants whom He pleases (7:128)." In the struggle against Pharoah and His forces, Bani Israel was told to equip themselves for *Jihad* with *salat* and *sabr*. Even though the word used is God, it means *salat* because this is the only effective means of seeking assistance from God. Fortitude and steadfastness in times of trial and hardship is a very difficult task which cannot be done without God's help, therefore Prophet Musa (Moses) advised his people to establish *salat* and show steadfastness. This is indicated by the words, 'you cannot attain fortitude but with God's help.' Obviously the best means to attain God's help is *salat*. In view of the great hardships envisaged in the struggle with Pharoah, Bani Israel prayed to God not to make them a trial for those who practise oppression and to deliver them by His mercy from the unbelievers (10:85-28). God accepted their prayer and told them the recipe to attain fortitude *sabr* and trust in God (*tawakkul*). We inspired Musa and his brother with the Message: 'Provide some houses for your people in Egypt, and make your houses into places of worship (as *qiblah*), and establish regular *salat*. And give glad tidings to the believers." (10:87) Bani Israel had lost their sense of nationhood under the bondage of Pharoah. They are Commanded to organise themselves through the establishment of congregational prayer in the different parts of Egypt. This is the starting point of an Islamic movement. The believers establish regular *salat* to acquire a sense of unity, fortitude and trust (*tawakkal*). (11)

11. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.3., pp.330-331.

When the believers successfully overcome the evil forces, they are given good news from God in these words: "Those who show fortitude to win the approval of their Lord and establish regular prayer --their's shall be the abode of the Hereafter, gardens wherein they will live for ever." (13:22)

The Holy Prophet is here advised to show fortitude in face of the opposition and abuses of the unbelievers of Makkah. And to acquire this quality of fortitude (*sabr*), he is told to establish regular *salat*, "Therefore O Muhammad endure what they say and glorify your Lord with His praises before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and glorify Him during the hours of night and at the extremes of the day; perhaps you may feel satisfied." (20:130)

"This is to comfort and console the Holy Prophet that you continue enduring with patience whatever they do against you and hearing their harsh words and go on performing the obligation of your mission. For this purpose you should offer *salat* in accordance with the prescribed times because it will create in you the necessary forbearance and fortitude. (12)

Instead of *salat* the word *tasbih* (glorify) is used, which, in common language, means remembrance of God (*dhikr*). Though here it is confined to specified times, remembrance of God is required all the time. Glorify (*tasbih*) is here combined with praise (*hamd*), which means to show the real form of remembrance of God (*dhikrallah*), because it is inclusive of both the aspects (of *tasbih* as well as *tahmid* i.e., glorification and praise of God). In *tasbih* the negative aspect of *tawhid* is dominant, while in *tahmid* the positive aspect is strong. The real form of remembrance of God is that wherein He is regarded

12. The Meaning of the *Qur'an*, Vol.7., pp.131-132.

free of all inappropriate and unsuitable attributes and characterized with all the high and good attributes. It is absolutely essential that the right balance between these attributes of God is maintained in His remembrance. A minor deviation from the right balance in respect to *tawhid* can create wrong impressions in the minds of people and thereby corrupt their whole system of thought. Therefore the Holy *Qur'an* has advised remembrance of God (*dhikrallah*) with *tasbih* (glorifying) and *tahmid* (praising) so that the believers are fully safeguarded against evil temptations and are able to build their relationship with their Lord on right and strong foundations, because without a relationship with God it is difficult for a man to remain steadfast on the straight path. (13).

And again the Holy Prophet is commanded to enjoin *salat* (prayer) on his followers: "Enjoin *salat* on your people and be steadfast therein" (20:132). This will produce qualities of steadfastness and fortitude in them. The words 'be steadfast therein' (والصبرعليها) mean that just as a farmer ploughs the field, sows the seeds, waters it and continuously looks after it, you work hard and then see what boundless blessings you reap. In these words, the Holy Prophet and his followers are assured of eternal success if they establish regular *salat* in their life. (14)

Fortitude (*sabr*) and prayer (*salat*) are two of the many qualities of God's devotees: "And O Prophet, give good news to those who adopt a humble way, whose hearts are filled with fear when God is mentioned before them, who endure with fortitude any affliction that befalls them, and who establish *salat*" (22:35). Thus *salat* and *sabr* are undoubtedly

13. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.III, p.344.

14. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.IV, p.248

The most valuable qualities of the believers, enabling them to face with courage and dignity the forces of evil and falsehood, bear all oppression, affliction and hardship with patient perseverance, remain steadfast in their struggle for the propagation of Truth (*dawat-i-Haq*) and finally defeat the evil forces and establish the Religion of God (*Iqamat-i-Din*) on the earth.

EFFICIENCY

The prayer is offered regularly five times daily. No matter where you are and what you are doing, when the time comes, you leave all your multifarious pursuits in life and come before your Lord for prayer. This strict regularity makes an individual a very disciplined and efficient worker. It becomes a habit with him to do everything on time and well.

Besides, observance of prayer creates and develops in man a sense of duty. He begins to realise his duty to his Creator and his fellow-beings. He becomes a most God fearing person. He considers it his duty to do everything perfectly because God Himself is beautiful and perfect and likes His creatures to create beauty and perfection in their work. According to Abu Hurairah, God's Messenger said, "God the Almighty is good and beautiful, and accepts only that which is good and beautiful." (1) This realisation makes a man a most efficient and diligent worker in the community. Whether he is a doctor, a scientist, a technologist, a politician, a businessman, an industrialist, or an ordinary worker, in whatever position he may be, he is an example, in his efficiency and hard work, to his colleagues, friends and others. And this is all due to prayer.

The *Holy Qur'an* describes hypocrite as lazy. They do not realise the purpose of prayer and therefore do not offer it properly: "So woe unto worshippers who are heedless of their prayer." (107:4-6) In *Surah Al-Nisa* : "When they stand up for prayer, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of man." (4:142)

1. *Muslim*, quoted by Dr. Ezzedin Ibrahim in the *An-Nawawis' Forty Hadith*, p. 50.

Efficiency further increases with the realisation on the part of an individual of the value of time. Regularity in prayer makes him really conscious of the value and importance of time and he therefore tries to make full use of it. He works hard and does not waste a single moment which he regards as being as precious as gold. This realisation helps to increase his labour and makes him a very efficient worker.

Refinement

The prayer helps a man to remove his defects, internal as well as external. Externally he becomes very refined and clean, and internally, pious and dutiful. This quality of prayer is described in these words: "And establish regular prayer at both ends of the day and at the approaches of the night; for those things that are good remove those that are evil." (11:114) It is through good deeds that a man is able to ward off evil. And prayer is referred to here as a good deed which helps believers to get over the hurdle of evil and enter into the fold of goodness and refinement. "This is the remedy for eradicating evil from the world: do good deeds and defeat evil with them. The best way of making yourself virtuous is to practise prayer, which will remind you of God over and over again, which will produce these characteristics in you that will help you fight successfully against the systematic and united front of evil that has been formed against the mission of Truth. This will also enable you to establish practically the system of virtue and reform." (2)

Another effect of prayer on the believer will be his greater awareness of his close relationship with God and this will have a tremendous influence

on his behaviour. He will make every effort to improve his deeds and bring them in line with what his Lord wants. God is Merciful and Kind, so a man tries to show mercy and kindness to his fellow creatures, God is Beautiful and Good, and likes beauty and goodness in every thing, so a man will try his best not only to be good to others but to see that beauty and goodness becomes a part of his behaviour. Whatever he does, he will do it in a nicer and better way so that it looks beautiful and fine.

Thus his action and work will reflect beauty and refinement. A group of such individuals will be a model of beauty and refinement. Being conscious of the Beauty and beautiful works of their Creator and also of His liking for beauty and goodness in everything, they will become pioneers of works of beauty and refinement.

The early Muslims far excelled all previous nations in the creation of beauty and refinement in everything. They excelled in their good behaviour towards other people, their treatment of the defeated nations and their great toleration of other faiths and religions. They excelled in the creation of beauty and refinement in works of art, literature and architecture. The beautiful castles and mosques of Cordova, Seville and Granada still bear witness to the spirit of beauty and refinement which was generated by the close relationship with God of early Muslims through the establishment of prayer.

Excellence

The prayer, being an instrument of communion with God, tends to develop good qualities in an individual. God is Omni-competent and Omni-Potent and a true believer would like all these qualities of God to be reflected in him on a minor scale. He would like, and also make every effort, to become better

than others in every field of work. In fact, a believer is the most refined and excellent person in society and a society composed of such persons will obviously be the best society in the world.

A sincere believer will be a little better than others in every field of activity. He will be a better teacher, a better scientist, a better doctor, a better businessman, a better employer, a better worker and, in short, excel others in quality of work in every area. The Holy Messenger was told to establish prayer so that he might attain the highest position of excellence attainable by man: "And pray in the small hours of the morning, an additional prayer for you; soon will your Lord raise you to a station of praise and glory." (17:79)

It is through prayer that the Holy Messenger is told to attain this position of excellence. Every believer, likewise, can attain a position of excellence according to his ability, diligence and steadfastness through prayer. The words "Raise you to a position of praise and glory," give good news for the Holy Prophet for he was very soon to attain a very respectable and honourable position in this world as well as in the next world. And people all over the world will be full of praise for him and hold him in honour and dignity. The opposition of the unbelievers will soon wither away and "Time is not far when the world will ring with echoes of his praise."

The Holy Prophet was advised to establish prayer at the prescribed times as well as an additional late night prayer (*tahajjud*) and God raised him to an exalted position when all people, including his determined enemies, were full of praises for him. If a believer establishes prayer properly, he can experience and attain the same excellence as did the Holy Prophet. The prayer is, in fact, a (*miraj*) station of excellence for a believer and he can rise

to great heights of excellence through it for, according to the Holy Prophet, "The prayer is a *miraj* for a believer." The attainment of excellence is both physical and spiritual: the believer may attain this excellence in his professional skill and his activities as well as in his spiritual and moral action.

Humility

God has promised success and prosperity for those who are humble, modest and lowly in the presence of their Creator in prayer: "Indeed, the believers are successful.... who humble themselves in their prayer." (23:1-3) Humility in prayer may signify one's own humble position and meagre powers and strength as well as a humble request and petition to the All-Powerful Lord and Creator of the universe. Believers who establish regular prayer develop the quality of humility. Their constant communion with God in prayer gradually makes them conscious of their own low, weak and insignificant position before the Grandeur and Might of their Lord.

The prayer makes a believer very humble and modest in ordinary life. This quality of believers is referred to by the *Holy Qur'an* in these words: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers (but) compassionate amongst each other. You will see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer)." (48:29) Obviously, believers are very gentle and compassionate amongst their brethren. "The traces of their earnestness and humility are engraved on their faces, i.e., penetrate their inmost being, the face being the outward sign of the inner man. If we take it in its literal sense a good man's face alone shows in him the grace and light of God; he is gentle, kind and forbearing, even helpful, relying on God, and possessing a blessed peace and calmness

(*sakina*) that can come from no other source but prayer. (3)

Humility is engraved in the hearts of believers through the practice of prayer. They are, in fact, the most gentle and kind people on the earth. Examples of extreme humility and gentleness are found amongst the believers in the early period of Muslim history. This quality of the believers is again mentioned in *Surah Maidah*: "Soon will God raise a people whom He will love as they will Him...humble towards believers, mighty against the unbelievers" (5:57).

A believer is certain that this life is not permanent but temporary and that one day he is to return to his Lord and meet Him. This feeling and realisation makes him very humble and gentle. And he is reminded of this fact five times a day in his prayer. He enjoys every moment of his prayer since he is very close to his Lord. On the other hand, hypocrites who do not believe in the Hereafter find prayer very difficult: "And prayer indeed is hard except to those who bring a lowly spirit, who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they are to return to Him." (11:45-46)

'Humble towards believers' means that they are mild, kindly, amiable and sympathetic to the believers, and 'mighty towards the unbelievers' means that they will be firm, strict and uncompromising towards the enemies of Islam because of their faith, sincere piety, strict principles, strong character and God-given intelligence. This humility and lowliness with friends is the effect of daily prayers. Even very stern and harsh persons become humble through constant practice of prayer. (For further

3. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p.1400.

details see under the heading *Khashia* in this book).

Gratitude and Thanksgiving

Prayer is an outward expression of our gratitude to God for His unlimited Blessings and Bounties. We express our thanks to our Lord with our heart, our tongue and our body. We admit His Lordship and Sovereignty and bow before Him in extreme humility and solemnity in prayer. The *Holy Qur'an* teaches Muslims to be grateful to God for all His Grace and Favours and not to be ungrateful, as unbelievers are. And the best way of expressing our gratitude to God is to practise prayer: "Tell My servants who believe to keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given." (14:31) Then in *Surah Ta'ha* the believers are asked to obey God in these words: "Surely, I am God, there is no deity but I, so serve Me, and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praises." (20:14)

This verse explicitly states the real purpose of prayer, that man should always remember God and should never forget Him. The deceptive manifestations of this world should not make him unmindful of the reality that he is a servant of God and not an independent being.

Prayer, in fact, is an answer to the natural call of the soul to be grateful to the Creator and Lord of the universe and bow before Him for all His Bounties and Blessings. Believers must always be grateful to God for all that He has bestowed upon them. And "gratitude to God is not to be measured by words. It should show itself in conduct and life." (4). And the obvious and outward form to express one's gratitude to God is prayer.

4. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali.

Prophet Musa (Moses) was commanded to establish regular prayer in gratitude to God's multifarious favours. It is His absolute right that His servants should be thankful to Him and prayer is one form of thanksgiving. God likes those of His servants who are grateful to Him. All the Messengers established prayer and were grateful to Him. Prophet Suleiman made a petition to God to enable him to be grateful to Him in these words: "O my Lord; so order me that I may be grateful for your favours." (27:19)

And God is pleased with those who are grateful to Him: "If you are grateful, He is pleased with you" (49:7). And God rewards His dutiful and faithful servants with immense success and prosperity: "And swiftly shall We reward those that (serve Us with) gratitude." (111:144-145)

And again in *Surah Al Qamar*: "As a Grace from Us, thus We reward those who give thanks." (54:35)

In this verse, Prophet Musa is reminding the people of Israel of their covenant with God, that is, if they are grateful and appreciate His Favours and make right use of them, and do not rebel against His Commandments, but surrender and submit to Him to show their gratitude to Him, He will increase His favours to them. The outward form of gratitude is to remember Him all the time and establish regular prayer as well.

"The Bible contains a long and detailed discourse to this effect. According to it, Prophet Musa, (Moses) on the eve of his death, reminded the Israelites of all the important events from their history, and reiterated all the Divine Commandments of the *Torah* (Old Testament) which God had sent to them through him. Then he told them in a long speech that if they obeyed their Lord, they would be given great favours. But if they adopted the

attitude of disobedience, they would get a terrible punishment: 'Here, O Israel, The Lord our God is One Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.....And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the Commandments of thy Lord, and His Laws, which I command thee this day for thy good.

'And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the Voice of the Lord thy God, observe (prayer) and do all His Commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the Voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field...But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the Voice of the Lord thy God, observe (the prayer) and do all His Commandments and His Laws which I command thee this day, that all those curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee; cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.... The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do.' (5)

"It should be noted that a reference to Prophet Musa (Moses) and his people has been made here to warn the people of Makkah of the consequences of their ingratitude towards this favour of God, that He had raised Prophet Muhammad (God's peace be upon him) from among them. This was a timely warning,

5. Abul Ala Maududi, *The Meaning of the Qur'an* Vol. VI., pp.8-9.

for at that time they were showing ingratitude by rejecting that Message. They were, therefore, warned to learn a lesson from the miserable condition of the Israelites which was the result of their ingratitude to and rebellion against God's Favours.

"In a way, this is a constant reminder to the Muslims of all times that if they are grateful to God and obey His Commandments and observe prayer, they will be rewarded with His Favours and Blessings in all sorts of way, but if they disobey and neglect prayer, they will be deprived of His Favours as the Israelites were. (5)

Obedience

Prayer also expresses our recognition of the Messengers of God. It shows our obedience to His Command in words as well as in deeds. We completely submit ourselves to His Command in response to the call of His Messengers. It is a clear sign of our obedience and submission to God as shown by the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "So establish regular prayer and give regular charity, and obey the Messenger, so that mercy may be shown to you" (24:56). This verse shows that those who keep up prayer in response to the call of the Messenger of God are promised His Mercy. In *Surah Al-Ahzab*, the wives of the Holy Messenger are told to obey God and establish regular prayer in these words: "Establish regular prayer, and give regular charity, and obey God and His Messenger." (33:33) Then in *Surah Al-Mujadilah*, the believers are commanded to keep up prayer in obedience to God in the following words: "Establish regular *salat* and practise regular charity, and obey God and His Messenger." (58:13)

The *Holy Qur'an* describes obedience to God as one of the qualities of the believers: "And the believers....they observe regular prayer, practise regular

charity, and obey God and His Messenger " (9:71). This shows that those who obey God and His Messenger also practise regular prayer. They are always conscious of their duty to the Creator and Sovereign and bow down before Him in prayer in obedience and reverence in the very midst of their daily engagements.

And "giving thanks" to God in *Qur'anic* terminology means complete obedience to His Commands. It is expressed in doing His will, in practising righteousness and in using all His Gifts of wisdom, power and health in His service alone. And prayer is mere outward expression of one's obedience to the Command of God. And abstention from prayer is an apparent sign that the person concerned has thrown away the yoke of obedience of God and His Messenger and has become independent and left the bondage of God.

In the last verse quoted above "the contrast between characteristics of the hypocrites (5:67) and of the true believers (5:71) clearly shows that the two are entirely different from each other, in spite of their outwardly similar profession of faith in Islam and obedience to it. The difference lies in their morals, conduct, habits, attitudes and ways of thinking. On the one hand are hypocrites whose tongues are never tired of professing faith in Islam, but who are devoid of sincere faith, and whose whole conduct belies their claim to faith. They are, as it were, like bottles which are labelled "musk", but contain cow dung, which may easily be recognised from its appearance and unpleasant odour. On the other hand are true believers, who are like those bottles which contain musk which may be tested in any way - by appearance, smell and other characteristics and shown to be musk. Likewise, though the outward label of Islam apparently makes both of them Muslims, the real characteristics of the hypocritical Muslims are so different

from those of the true Muslims that they have, in fact, become two different communities, The hypocritical Muslims are all neglectful of God, take an interest in evil things, deviate from all that is good and never co-operate with true believers."

In contrast to them, the true believers, men and women, have practically become one community. All of them take an interest in what is good and abhor what is evil; they remember God day and night and cannot think of life without the constant remembrance of God, they are very generous in spending in the way of God, and obey Him and His Messenger without any mental reservations." (6) They practise prayer, which is the most effective and strongest means of remembering God, whereas the hypocrites forget God and come for prayer lazily and grudgingly merely to show the believers that they are with them. The believers are faithfully obeying the covenant with God and His Messenger with complete honesty and sincerity, unlike the hypocrites, who are unfaithful traitors.

Contentment

Those who are steadfast in prayer find true contentment and lasting peace and happiness in it. They often see the light in their own heart and enjoy the inner spiritual experience which gives them real peace and satisfaction. The *Holy Qur'an* refers to this state of mind of the believers in these words: "But He guides to Himself those who turn to Him... They are those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God, for without doubt in the remembrance of God hearts do find satisfaction." (13:27-28) This verse clearly states that tranquillity and real peace of mind is enjoyed by those who are in constant companionship with God through prayer. The greater the communion of an individual with his Lord, the more contented

6. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*. Vol. IV, p. 210

will he feel in his daily life. Whoever turns to Him in prayer will without doubt find His Light and peace of mind. And in fact lasting contentment and happiness lies in the remembrance of God.

This verse gives good news to those people who practise regular prayer and often remember God in their daily life. They will find complete satisfaction and contentment of heart. The worldly fears, worries, disappointments, inflictions, and other hardships will not distract the heart of a believer who is engaged in the remembrance of God. He will patiently and joyfully carry on his daily work undisturbed by the passing events of life. He is like the traveller in a train, who observes various scenes from the window of the train, green fields, forests, mountains, rivers, sandy deserts and barren lands, small villages and big towns, but lets them pass and continues on his journey, concerned only to reach his final destination.

If you turn to God in prayer, that feeling, that light, that experience of complete contentment may come to you. You may then enjoy even the pangs of sorrow and hardships with satisfaction, knowing they are but passing events and should not be allowed to leave any permanent effect on the heart. Only prayer and remembrance of God can enable one to really enjoy the various phases of life with contentment.

The Muslims are, therefore, told to keep in contact with their Lord through *salat* in these words: "Surely, I am God, there is no deity but I, so serve Me, and establish regular prayer for My remembrance." (20:14)

This verse shows the real significance of daily prayer. It reminds man of his relationship with God and advises him that prayer is the most effective

from those of the true Muslims that they have, in fact, become two different communities, The hypocritical Muslims are all neglectful of God, take an interest in evil things, deviate from all that is good and never co-operate with true believers."

In contrast to them, the true believers, men and women, have practically become one community. All of them take an interest in what is good and abhor what is evil; they remember God day and night and cannot think of life without the constant remembrance of God, they are very generous in spending in the way of God, and obey Him and His Messenger without any mental reservations." (6) They practise prayer, which is the most effective and strongest means of remembering God, whereas the hypocrites forget God and come for prayer lazily and grudgingly merely to show the believers that they are with them. The believers are faithfully obeying the covenant with God and His Messenger with complete honesty and sincerity, unlike the hypocrites, who are unfaithful traitors.

Contentment

Those who are steadfast in prayer find true contentment and lasting peace and happiness in it. They often see the light in their own heart and enjoy the inner spiritual experience which gives them real peace and satisfaction. The *Holy Qur'an* refers to this state of mind of the believers in these words: "But He guides to Himself those who turn to Him... They are those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God, for without doubt in the remembrance of God hearts do find satisfaction." (13:27-28) This verse clearly states that tranquillity and real peace of mind is enjoyed by those who are in constant companionship with God through prayer. The greater the communion of an individual with his Lord, the more contented

6. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*. Vol. IV, p. 210

will he feel in his daily life. Whoever turns to Him in prayer will without doubt find His Light and peace of mind. And in fact lasting contentment and happiness lies in the remembrance of God.

This verse gives good news to those people who practise regular prayer and often remember God in their daily life. They will find complete satisfaction and contentment of heart. The worldly fears, worries, disappointments, inflictions, and other hardships will not distract the heart of a believer who is engaged in the remembrance of God. He will patiently and joyfully carry on his daily work undisturbed by the passing events of life. He is like the traveller in a train, who observes various scenes from the window of the train, green fields, forests, mountains, rivers, sandy deserts and barren lands, small villages and big towns, but lets them pass and continues on his journey, concerned only to reach his final destination.

If you turn to God in prayer, that feeling, that light, that experience of complete contentment may come to you. You may then enjoy even the pangs of sorrow and hardships with satisfaction, knowing they are but passing events and should not be allowed to leave any permanent effect on the heart. Only prayer and remembrance of God can enable one to really enjoy the various phases of life with contentment.

The Muslims are, therefore, told to keep in contact with their Lord through *salat* in these words: "Surely, I am God, there is no deity but I, so serve Me, and establish regular prayer for My remembrance." (20:14)

This verse shows the real significance of daily prayer. It reminds man of his relationship with God and advises him that prayer is the most effective

means of keeping communion with Him. It takes an individual, at least for a few minutes at intervals every day, from his worldly pursuits in life and brings him nearer to God.

This is the real object of prayer. "It has been prescribed to remind people that they should not become neglectful of God through worldly diversions and that they should remember that man is not an unbridled being but a servant of God. Prayer has been prescribed five times a day to remind man of God's presence." (7)

Once Abu Darda said, "Shouldn't I tell you a deed which is better than other deeds for you. It is superior to all in degree of excellence and is better than all deeds in the eyes of your Master. It is better than spending gold and silver. It is better than even fighting with your enemies (for the cause of Islam)." The Companions said, "Tell us what is that?" He replied, "Remembrance of God, all glory be to Him." (8) The *Hadith* which says that remembrance of God is the best act is supported by *Ahmad*, *Ibn Majah*, *Hakim* and *Bahaiqi*.

According to Muaz bin jabal, man has not performed any act of goodness which can save him from the punishment of God except the remembrance of God. And obviously the best way shown by the Messenger of God of His remembrance is to establish prayer.

An individual finds himself busy all the time in the worldly pursuits of life and has very little time to spare for spiritual exercise. As a result, He has lost his peace of mind and is now struggling in utter confusion in the divergent ways he is following in the hope of some contentment. He is

7. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. VII., p. 94.

8. *Muatta Imam Ibn Malik*, pp. 210-211.

still ignoring the best available means God has given him to attain real and lasting satisfaction: "Keep up prayer... and surely the remembrance of God is the greatest thing (or force) in life." (29: 45)

A real "prayer purges us of anything (act, plan, thought, motive, words) of which we should be ashamed or which would work injustice to others. Such prayer passes into our inmost life and being, for then we realise the Presence of God, and that is true *dhikr* (remembrance), for remembrance is the bringing to mind of things as present to us which might otherwise be absent to us. And that is the greatest thing in life. It is subjective to us, it fills our consciousness with God. For God is in any case always present and knows all." (9) And when one attains this degree of consciousness of God, he is freed of all worldly worries and fears and reaches the height of satisfaction and contentment of heart. He is at that moment on top of the world.

"It should also be noted that the recitation of the Book, the keeping up of prayer and the remembrance of God are nearly identical, for the *Qur'an* is recited in prayers, and the *Qur'an* is the best means of the remembrance of God. Every line of it brings before the mind of the reader the Goodness, Power, and Knowledge of the divine Being, while there is no other book which fulfils this requirement. The *Qur'an* is neither a book of law, though it contains the principles of the law necessary for the guidance of man, nor a book of sacred history, but it is pre-eminently a book that manifests the Glory, Greatness, Grandeur, Love, Purity Power and Knowledge of the supreme Being.

While, as generally understood, by the remembrance of God is meant His glorification and praise in

9. Yusuf Ali, op.cit, p. 1041.

prayer. Abdullah Ibn Abbas is reported to have said that by the '*dhikr*' (remembrance) of God is here meant God's remembrance of man or His raising him to a place of eminence." (3) This is confirmed by the *Holy Qur'an* in these words: "So remember Me (with prayer and worship) and I will remember you (with favours and blessings), and give thanks to Me and be not ungrateful." (2:152) In fact, Islam means submission of the individual to the Will of God, who, in turn, grants him peace, prosperity and happiness in this world. If an individual remembers God through prayer, He favours him with a contented and peaceful life.

The *Holy Qur'an* gives news of everlasting prosperity and happiness to those who practise righteousness in this life in obedience to His Command: "Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new life, a life, that is good and pure." (16:97) It is good news to the faithful servants of God who practise regular prayer. "Faith, if sincere, means right conduct. When these two confirm each other, God's Grace transforms our life. Instead of being troubled and worried, we have peace and contentment; instead of being assailed at every turn by false alarms and the assault of evil, we enjoy calm and attain purity. The transformation is visible in this life itself, but the reward in terms of the Hereafter will be far beyond our deserts." (4)

This verse removes the misunderstanding of those who think that works of righteousness and virtue may win a success in the Hereafter, but, definitely, destroy the worldly life. The *Holy Qur'an* clearly states here that people who practise righteousness succeed not only in the Hereafter, but also in the

3. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali.

4. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 683.

life of this world. They lead an honest and contented life and are not disturbed by the greed and worries of a dishonest life.

This shows that "the righteous attitude not only leads to a happy life in the Hereafter, but it also guarantees, by *Allah's* Grace, a pure and happy life even in this world. And this is a fact; those people who are sincerely righteous, honest, pure and fair in their dealings, enjoy a much better life in this world, for they enjoy that confidence and honour and respect because of their spotless character, which is not enjoyed by those who lack those virtues. They obtain pure and outstanding successes which are denied to those who employ dirty and disgusting ways to win success. Above all, they enjoy, even though they may be living in huts, that peace of mind and satisfaction of conscience which is denied to the wicked who may dwell in mansions and palaces." (5) (For further details on this subject see the last topic in this book .i.e. Itminan.)

Real Success and Prosperity

Real success and lasting prosperity is for those who remember their Lord and practise prayer: He indeed is successful who purifies himself, and remembers the name of His Lord, and then prays." (87: 14-15)

According to this verse of the *Holy Qur'an*, only those people attain real success and prosperity in life who constantly keep in communion with their Lord through prayer. They prosper in goodness and piety and enhance their individual prestige and good will in the community as well as in the eyes of their Lord. If anyone wants to attain real prosperity in life, he is advised to practise prayer:

5. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. VI. p. 98.

"Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord in secret and keep up prayer. And whoever purifies himself, purifies only for his own good." (35:18)

In fact, "prayer is one of the means of purifying ourselves of lower motives in life, for in prayer we seek the Presence of God. But the purity which we seek is for our own souls, we confer no favour on God or any power in the spiritual world." (6) And this is the real success of man, according to the *Holy Qur'an* : "O you who believe; when you meet force, be firm and remember God much (and often), that you may prosper." (8:45)

The word *falah* (prosper) is very comprehensive and includes prosperity in this world and the Hereafter. Some people can defeat others in fighting and achieve domination on the earth without remembrance of God, but it cannot become a means of their real prosperity (*falah*). Real prosperity comes only through that domination which has been achieved by the remembrance of God (through prayer). That is why remembrance of God is made a means of maintaining the courage of those who struggle in the way of God. This shows what a high place is assigned in Islam to the remembrance of God. A Muslim, even when engaged in a deadly fight with the enemy, is told not to forget his Lord, but to remember Him even more and often. And a believer is commanded even in the battlefield to offer his prayer (IV : 101-102) for this ensures his real success in both the worlds.

That the prayer is better than other things is again emphasised in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "O you who believe; when the call is sounded for prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave off business (and traffic). That is

better for you, if you knowand remember God often, that you may prosper." (67:9-10) Islam requires communion with the Creator to be maintained all the time and daily prayer enables Muslims to develop their spiritual faculties to the maximum of their ability. Daily prayer is much more suited to lift up a man spiritually and feed him with true spiritual food than is any other form of worship.

The *Holy Qur'an* calls upon believers to remember God through prayer, so that they may attain real prosperity in life. Goodness of mind and a healthy spirit, which is attained through prayer, is prosperity par excellence, though it cannot always be measured in terms of wealth or other worldly gains. According to the *Holy Qur'an*, only those people attain real success and prosperity who practise regular prayer in their life: "Who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayer....and it is those who are truly successful. (11:3-5) Then the *Holy Qur'an* advises believers to practise prayer so that they may prosper: "O you who believe; bow down, prostrate yourself and adore your Lord; and do good; that you may prosper." (22:77) Thus prosperity is promised to those believers who practise prayer: "Indeed the believers are successful..... those who humble themselves in their prayer." (23:1-2) And again in *Surah Al-Ala* : "But those will prosper who purify themselves and glorify the Name of their Lord, and practise prayer." (87:14)

It is an essential quality of the Righteous and the Doers of Good that they always practise prayer and yearn towards their Lord in duty, obedience and love, with the hope that they will win peace, rest and prosperity for themselves in their future life. They get these blessings because they submit their will to God's Will and receive His Guidance. They will surely do well in this life and will reach true goal in the future: "A guide and a Mercy to the

Doers of Good,..... Those who practise prayer and give regular charity, and have (in their hearts) the assurance of the Hereafter. These are on (true) guidance from their Lord; and these are the ones who will prosper" (7) (xxx1:3-5).

God's Blessings- A Good Reward.

God does not waste the efforts of those who do good to others and practise regular prayer. They are promised the Mercy and Blessing of God. All people who keep up prayer will have their reward from their Lord: "As to those who hold fast by the book and establish regular prayer, never shall we suffer the reward of the righteous to perish." (7:170) It is a trade in which there is no loss. The people who practise regular prayer are promised two things from their Lord. First, their efforts will not be wasted but will be amply rewarded; and second, they will have the Blessings and Mercy of God. "That which is with God is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord;..... And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer."

The higher and more durable gifts are for those who truly obey and worship their Lord. A better and more lasting reward is promised to them if they, along with other acts of righteousness, practise prayer. These people really deserve the permanent gifts of God for they always keep in personal communion with Him through prayer. Such people will have no fear nor will they grieve on the Day of Judgement: "Those who believe and do good deeds, and keep up prayer and pay *zakat*, their reward is with their Lord." (2:277)

In this surah and the one before it, God "has presented two characters for contrast. One is a selfish

7. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p.1080.

worshipper of wealth. the shylock, who, unmindful of God and His creatures, is engaged day and night in amassing wealth. The other is the worshipper of God, the generous and sympathetic person who observes the rights of God and His creatures, who earns wealth and spends it on himself and on others and in doing good deeds. God disapproves of the first type of people because they cannot build any good and stable society: Nay, they even make themselves and others miserable in this world, and they shall meet with grief, sorrow and affliction in the Hereafter. In contrast to this, God approves of the second type of people (mentioned in the above verse) for they help build a good and stable society and achieve real success. They have also peace of mind in this world and will be blessed with all kinds of heavenly pleasures in the Hereafter. (8)

People who possess these characteristics and offer their prayer regularly will most certainly have their reward with their Lord and will have nothing to fear nor to grieve. God appreciates these people for their good and righteous deeds. Such people are blessed with real peace of mind and other goodly pleasures of life. This reward is reserved for those who strictly guard their prayer, observe all its conditions and offer it punctually at stated times with the spirit of humility and earnestness: "And who (strictly) guard their prayers; these will be the heirs, who will inherit Paradise: They will dwell therein (for ever)." (23:9-11)

'Safeguarding of prayers' means strictly maintaining the five daily prayers, observing and guarding the timing of prayers, the proprieties of prayers and the basic elements and parts of prayers, in short, strictly observing everything that is related to prayer. All such people will be rewarded with

8. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol.1., p.205.

everlasting happiness by their Lord. These verses of *Surah Mu'minun* refer to four important principles. First, all those who believe in the *Qur'an* and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and practise regular prayer will prosper in this world and the Hereafter, irrespective of their colour, creed or race. Second, prosperity comes neither through sheer faith (*iman*) nor merely through good deeds, but as a result of the combination of both. When people believe in the Divine Message and act accordingly they will surely attain success and prosperity. Third, the prosperity mentioned in this verse does not mean only material and worldly welfare but refers to an all-pervading life of bliss, benevolence and grace. (9)

It shows that the habit of regular prayer is essential to our spiritual well-being and development. It brings us closer to God by developing and strengthening in us the seven jewels of our faith, viz.: (1) humility, (2) avoidance of vanity, (4) sexual purity, (5) fidelity to trusts, and (6) to covenants and (7) an earnest desire to be closer to God. (10)

Prosperity is a very wide term and includes betterment in this world as well as bliss in the Hereafter. "O you who believe; bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that you may prosper." (22:77)

Again we find it refers to prosperity, both in this life and the Hereafter. And the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an* mentions *ajr* in place of *falah*, which means the same thing: "And (especially) those who establish prayer and give charityto them

9. *The Tafheem al Qur'an*, Abul Ala Maududi, Vol. 111, pp. 267.68.

10. *The Tafheem al Qur'an*, Vol. 1V., p. 233.

shall We soon give a great reward." (4:162) And in *Surah Luqman*, great reward and prosperity are promised to those who practise regular prayer: "Those who establish regular prayer, and give regular charity.... And these are the ones who will prosper." (31:4-5)

Prayer and righteous deeds are referred to metaphorically in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an* as "commerce that will never fail": Those who.... establish prayer and spend (in charity)...hope for a commerce that will never fail." (35:29) An individual who is engaged in this kind of trade is making a capital investment which will continue growing without any diminution with the Grace of God. God has guaranteed him evergrowing returns much more than his merits deserve. A righteous man's trade will never fail or fluctuate owing to economic depressions but will continually yield profit. This deed of the believers is compared to business because in business a man invests his capital and all his skill, ability and hard work with the hope that he will not only get his capital back and reward for his time, skill and labour but will also get additional profit. Likewise, a believer obeys the Commandment of God and practises prayer and spends his time, money and labour in the service of Islam with the hope that God will not only reward him fully for all this but will also bestow upon him His ever lasting Bliss. But there is a great difference in the two forms of business because there is a possibility of loss in worldly business, whereas in the other there is no fear of loss. (11)

11. *Tafheen al Qur'an*, Vol. 1V., p. 233.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

SECTION FIVE

SOCIAL BENEFITS

INTRODUCTION

It must be remembered that the obligatory (*fard*) prayer must be offered in congregation. The Holy Prophet and his Companions always offered five daily prayers in congregation, because it is an essential condition of the prayer. The *Holy Qur'an* commands believers to establish prayer and not merely to offer prayer. "Worship none but God, ..speak aright with the people, establish prayer and pay *zakat* " (2:83). The word used is '*iqamat -as-salat*' which is a very comprehensive term. It means that prayer should be performed in congregation and that permanent arrangements should be made for it in every house, otherwise prayer will not be considered as established, even if every inhabitant of a place offers prayer individually." (1) This is further clarified by another verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "Establish prayer, pay *zakat*, and bow before Me, along with those who bow down." (2:43) Here, the condition of 'bow along with those who bow down' signifies the importance of congregational prayer.

The congregational prayer is established even when there is a threat of attack from the enemy. The Holy Prophet was commanded to establish prayer with the believers under these circumstances: "And when you, O Prophet, are among the Muslims and are going to lead them in prayer (in a state of war), let a party of them stand behind you, carrying their weapons with them" (4:102). And again in *surah Al-Baqrah*: "Take great care of your prayers, especially of '*salat-al-wasta*', and stand before God like devoted servants. Even if you are in danger, you must offer prayer anyhow-on foot or on horseback. And when you have peace again, remember God in that manner He has taught you which you did not know before. (2:238-239) " The Holy Prophet and his Companions did not leave congregational prayer even when they

1. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol.1.p54.

were ill. It is related that some people were brought to the congregation in such condition that men were supporting them and they had to be supported to stand in the rows. (2)

Abu Hurairah reported the Holy Prophet as saying, "The Prayer offered in congregation is twenty five times superior (in reward) to the prayer offered alone in one's house or in a business centre. Anyone who performs a good ablution and goes to the mosque with the sole intention of praying, for every step he takes to the mosque God upgrades him and forgives one sin till he enters the mosque. When he enters the mosque, he is considered to be in prayer as long as he is waiting for the prayer to begin. And the angels ask for God's forgiveness for him and keep saying 'O God; Be merciful to him and forgive him, as long as he keeps on sitting at his praying place and does not talk.'" (3)

According to the Late Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, "The real object of prayer, however, is better achieved when the act of prayer becomes congregational. The spirit of all true prayer is social. Even the hermit abandons the society of men in the hope of finding, in a solitary abode, the fellowship of God. A Congregation is an association of men who, animated by the same aspiration, concentrate themselves on a single object and open up their inner selves to the working of a single impulse. It is a psychological truth that association multiplies the normal man's power of perception, deepens his emotion, and dynamizes his will to a degree unknown to him in the privacy of his individuality. Indeed, regarded as a psychological phenomenon, prayer is still a

2. Abdul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *The Four Pillars of Islam*, Lucknow (India), 1976, p. 48.

3. *Bukhari*, Vol. 1., p. 277.

mystery, for psychology has not yet discovered the laws relating to the enchantment of human sensibility in a state of association. With Islam, however, this socialization of spiritual illumination through associative prayer is a special point of interest. As we pass from the daily congregational prayer to the annual ceremony round the central mosque of Makkah (*Ka'bah*), you can easily see how the Islamic institution of worship gradually enlarges the sphere of human association.

"Prayer, then, whether individual or associative, is an expression of man's inner yearning for a response in the awful silence of the universe. It is a unique process of discovery whereby the searching ego affirms itself in the very moment of self-negation and thus discovers its own worth and justification as a dynamic factor in the life of the universe. True to the psychology of mental attitude in prayer, the form of worship in Islam symbolises both affirmation and negation. Yet, in view of the fact borne out by the experience of the race that prayer, as an inner act, has found expression in a variety of forms, the *Qur'an* says: "For every nation We have prescribed a way of worship, which it follows; therefore, O Muhammad, let them not dispute with you concerning this matter. And invite the people to the Way of your Lord, for you are on the straight (Right) Way. And if they dispute with you, say to them, "God knows full well what you are doing; on the Day of Resurrection, God will judge between you concerning that about which you differ." (22: 67-69)

The form of prayer ought not to become a matter of dispute. Which side you turn your face is certainly not critical. The *Qur'an* is perfectly clear on this point. "The East and the West all belong to God; you will face God in whichever direction you turn your face. God is All-Embracing (2:11)." (4)

4. *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, 1977, pp. 92-93

This means that, "God is not confined to any direction, eastern or western, but is the Master of all directions and places. If a particular direction is fixed for worship, it does not mean that God resides in that direction only. There is, therefore, no need to enter into disputes as to why a certain direction and place has been fixed instead of the other or why faces were at first turned towards a particular direction but now are being turned towards a different direction and a different place. God is not limited, narrowminded, short-sighted or indigent. On the contrary, His Kingdom is boundless and so are His Vision and Generosity. He knows which of His servants remember Him and also where and when and with what intention." (5)

And again, in the same *surah*, it is explained in some detail: "It is no virtue that you turn your faces towards the east or the west, but virtue is that one should sincerely believe in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Books and the Prophets, and out of His love, spend of one's best wealth for relatives and orphans, for the needy and the way-farer, for beggars, and for the ransom of slaves, and establish prayer and pay *zakat*. And the virtuous are those who keep their promises when they make them and show fortitude in hardship and adversity and in the struggle (between the Truth and falsehood); such are the faithful people and such are the pious." (2:177)

Thus it is clear that the external religious forms of prayer and the direction towards which the worshipper turns his face in prayer are not of real significance. And there is no real virtue in the mere act of adopting one form of prayer or another. Real virtue lies in believing God and obeying His Commandments with extreme sincerity and humility

and doing good in various ways by helping His creatures. This is true for all times. However, God Almighty has from time to time shown to man various ways through certain form of prayer, to attain piety and goodness. These forms of prayer were selected in accordance with the needs and requirements of man in particular situations. Some people were commanded to offer prayer while standing (*qiy'an*), others while bowing (*ruku*) and still others by prostrating (*sajdah*). Some people prayed to God in meditation. Finally, when man attained full maturity in perceiving and understanding the real concept of God with all His Attributes, he was given a comprehensive form of prayer, combining in it all the previous forms (meditation, standing, bowing and prostration) through the Last Messenger of God (p. b.u.h). If anyone offers prayer with complete sincerity, with all his heart, submitting himself wholly to God, he is most likely to attain virtue and goodness, because this is the best and most effective means of achieving that end. In fact this prayer is the answer to man's long inner yearning for a response to his calls in the dreadful silence of the universe.

There is great virtue and goodness in congregational prayer, "Some of these are of a social and collective nature like unity, solidarity and fraternization. But there are other benefits in it also, those of an individual character. One of these is that when a large number of Muslims get together with the object of turning towards God, with their heads bowed and hearts filled with hope and fear, special Blessings of the Lord descend from the heavens and cover them up.

"By offering prayer in congregation, it becomes easier to maintain regularity in worship, a competitive spirit is created among the worshippers and they try to excel one another. One can also correct one's

mistakes and learn the rules governing prayer easily by offering it up congregationally. It further provides an excellent opportunity for the general body of worshippers to follow the example of the *Ulema* (scholars) and other devout servants of the Lord."

"Another notable advantage of congregational prayer is that sometimes the whole congregation comes under the benign shadow of the Lord due to the devoutness and spiritual excellence of the venerable and virtuous men participating in it. The devotion and earnestness of a single man of God often exerts a bracing influence on scores of dejected and downhearted people, and because of him the prayers of all the participants in the congregation are accepted. As the Holy Prophet once said, " (Those devout and pure in heart) are men whose companions (in prayer) are never left unblessed." (6)

Social Organisation and Social Discipline

No nation or community can live and survive without proper organisation and social discipline in its rank and file. Individual discipline and individual character alone cannot produce any tangible results unless organised on a social and community level. An individual, however disciplined, cannot achieve his ideal unless the people among whom he lives cooperate with him in attaining it. It is extremely difficult, or rather impossible, for an individual to act according to the principles he believes in without the co-operation of the whole community.

A man is not born alone and he cannot live alone. His whole life is tied up with his relatives, friends and neighbours, and a thousand other companions

in life. Besides, a very hard duty is assigned to a believer in that he must spread and establish the Law of God on the earth. It is his duty to stop people, if possible, by force from obeying any man-made law which is against God. Obviously, this difficult task cannot be successfully done by an individual. He cannot fight alone against the united forces of evil. Even if there be millions of believers, who try individually to achieve this objective, they cannot succeed against the well-organised and disciplined forces of the enemies. It is therefore, absolutely necessary that all those who want to worship and obey God must organise themselves into one solid block (بنیان مری). They must unite and help one another to achieve this objective. They must have unity in word and in deed, which is absolutely indispensable for their struggle against the forces of evil in this world.

The prayer not only helps in building individual character but also assists in building the whole structure of community organisation and social discipline. Daily prayer keeps this organisation alive and working and never lets it get rusty or ineffective. This is why prayer in congregation is obligatory and those who abstain from it deliberately without any proper justification are sinners in the eyes of God. The gathering of believers in the mosque five times daily is the basis of the community of the *millat-i-Islamia*. A slight weakness in this organisation shatters the whole superstructure of its social system and gradually destroys the superiority of the Muslim community: "Then there came after them an evil generation who neglected (and missed) *salat* and followed lusts: soon then, they will face destruction." (19:59)

The Prophet Musa (Moses) was commanded to organise his community on a sound footing in order to combat the well-organised and powerful forces of his enemy,

the Pharaoh, of Egypt, by establishing regular prayer: "We inspired Musa and His brother...make your dwellings into places of worship, and establish regular prayer." (10:87)

Just look how the Muslim community is organised and disciplined into a solid wall through the institution of daily prayer. A Muslim hears the call for prayer, he leaves all his engagements and goes to the mosque to offer his prayer with his brothers in Islam. It is a discipline more strict than the discipline of the army but without any coercion or force. It is a voluntary discipline imposed from within by individual Muslims on themselves to win the Pleasure of their Lord. It is the self-discipline and superior mental culture of individuals which creates in them the team spirit. They are ever ready to obey the Command of their Lord and follow their leader in doing their duty.

In prayer, they stand in straight rows all together, rich and poor, black and white, employer and employee, servant and master, in front of their Lord. They stand shoulder to shoulder and perform their bowing (*ruku*) and prostrations (*sujud*) together. This regular parade five times daily develops in them a quality of social discipline which is absolutely essential for the efficient and effective working of any community. This voluntary gathering gives the Muslim community the utmost and speed for action during any emergency. They can assemble at the call for prayer without any unnecessary delay at any time of the day or night. It gives them unity of purpose for they all have a common ideology and a common objective in obedience to the Commandment of God and, above all, unity of action.

All these benefits spring from the institution of congregational prayer.

Community Centre

Social gathering on various occasions is a natural phenomenon in the life of organised communities. Islam has rightly recognised this aspect of man's social life and has provided him with ample opportunities through daily prayer, Friday prayer, and annual Eidain. Whenever and wherever Muslims assemble, they always commence and end their social functions with prayer. Their gatherings are always for good and the establishment of good and justice in the world.

These daily and weekly gatherings for prayer have many benefits for the individual as well as for the community. When the Muslims assemble in the mosque, they meet other people who believe in one deity, follow one Messenger and one Book and have one common objective. These feelings unite them, in spite of differences of race, language, colour or nationality, into one homogeneous group. They feel as brothers and companions whose gains and losses are common, and who are knit together into the general brotherhood of Islam (49:10). It would be true to say that the enforcement of the Muslim brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. On it was based the Prophet's sermon at his last pilgrimage, and Islam cannot be completely realised until this ideal is achieved." (7)

When such people meet together they see one another as friends: the poor, the rich the lame, the invalid and the blind all meet together and see one another's condition. Naturally, these friends and brothers in faith feel and share one another's grief and pain. The rich will get the opportunity to meet and know their poor brethren, and the poor and the invalid will get the chance to meet the wealthy members of the Islamic society and acquaint them of

7. Holy Qur'an, translated by A.Yusuf Ali, p.1405.

their needs. Thus various members of the community meet and share one another's grief and sufferings. This helps to develop love and affection between them and to bring them closer to one another.

These assemembles also help the individual members of the community to overcome their weaknesses. In this way the Islamic society is able to eradicate evil on an individual as well as on a community level. And gradually the whole community is purified of undesirable and harmful elements. The prayer is, in fact, a means of bringing all Muslims together for solving their many problems. During the time of the Holy Prophet and that of his righteous Caliphs, whenever any important thing happened, or any political, social or national problem arose, or any religious commandment was to be announced, a call for prayer was given and all the Muslims would assemble in the *Masjid-i-Nabawi* without delay. The prayer was thus really a means of solving all their problems, social, political, economic or religious, and the mosque was truly a community centre for them.

The prayer is the first essential of Islam and reflects its religious, social, cultural, political and moral objectives. The mosque is the centre of all kinds of gatherings of the Muslims, and prayer is the essential and indispensable function of any gathering. It teaches social discipline, obedience, faithfulness and unity, and the Muslim community remains united and solid during its establishment and withers away as soon as it is ignored, neglected or lost. That is why the Holy Prophet said that the covenant between us and the Beduin of Arabia is prayer. Whoever forsakes it, goes back to *kufir* (unbelief) (8)

8. *Mishkat al Masabih*, Vol.1., p.1150. transmitted by (Ahmad, Nasai, Tirimizi and Ibn Majah).

Mutual Help and Co-operation

This quality of the believers that they establish prayer and give out their wealth to their less fortunate brethren is mentioned time and again in the *Holy Qur'an*: "Who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them." (2:1)

All bounties proceed from God and a true believer not only uses all His Bounties in humility and moderation but also gives out of every one of them something that contributes to the well-being of others. He provides whatever he can to meet the needs of his less fortunate fellow-beings whom he meets in the mosque.

The institution of prayer cements their personal, social and cultural relationship and gradually creates and strengthens their co-operation in the economic as well as other fields of activities. They help each other in every possible way merely to seek the Pleasure of God and give the needs and requirements of other Muslim brothers preference over their own: "But those who, before them, had homes (in Medinah) and had adopted the faith, show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot)" (59:9).

This refers to the Ansars, who accepted Islam and invited the Holy Prophet and his Companions to join them in Medinah. "The *hijra* was possible because of their goodwill and their generous hospitality. They entertained the Prophet and all the refugees (*muhajirin*) who came with him. The most remarkable ties of full brotherhood were established between individual members of the one group and of the other.

Until they got their own resources, the Ansars regularly helped their *muhajirin* brethren in various ways. They counted it a privilege to entertain the *muhajirin* and even the poor vied with the rich in a spirit of self-sacrifice." (9)

True Muslims help their brothers in need, in spite of their own poverty, to win the Pleasure of their Lord. They deny them-selves their own basic needs in order to meet the needs of other Muslims, and sometimes, even, reach the border of starvation merely to help other people in need. The devotion and sincerity with which a true Muslim serves his community and helps his fellow-beings is a proof beyond doubt of his own self-denial for the sake of others. All these feelings of co-operation and mutual help are daily nourished and strengthened by prayer: "Who establish regular prayer and spend (freely) out of the gifts We have given them for sustenance. Such in truth are the true believers." (8:3) This verse describes the qualities of true believers, who establish prayer and give generously out of their wealth to the poor and needy in the community. They are always ready to help others, day and night, in the cause of Islam.

EQUALITY AND BROTHERHOOD

The prayer in congregation is a training in brotherhood. All Muslims, irrespective of colour, race or nationality, stand in prayer before their Lord as equals. If a sweeper comes first, he occupies the first row and the one who comes last, be he a Duke, or Head of the State, or the richest man in the country, stands in the last row. No one can reserve his seat in the mosque for prayer and none has the right to stop any Muslim from offering his prayer anywhere in the mosque, or turn him away from the place where he was standing first. None has the right or the privilege to climb over other people, or go through their ranks to occupy the first row.

All Muslims stand together in rows to offer their prayer without any special distinction or privilege for any one; nobody becomes untouchable, or loses his self-respect by standing near some humble or poor person. All Muslims, including governors, sweepers, capitalists and workers stand together shoulder to shoulder as one people before One God. This demonstration of human brotherhood is repeated five times every day.

This is an example of democracy such as no religion or social group other than Islam has successfully established in this world. Human distinctions are levelled down in prayer and the pride of the rich is cut down and the lowness of the poor is raised, so that all feel equal and humble before their Lord. The organisation of prayer in rows destroys all class distinctions in society and all narrow class feelings of nationhood, or tribe, or colour or race. In spite of linguistic and ethnic differences, they stand together as brothers in prayer. This daily practice in democracy and human brotherhood is unique. It always reminds people that they are servants

of God and, as such, they are all one people, brothers in faith: "The believers are but a single brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers." (49:10)

Dr. Iqbal must have realised the great benefit of congregational prayer in Islam for developing the spirit of equality and brotherhood when he said, "Yet we cannot ignore the important consideration that the posture of the body is a real factor in determining the attitude of mind. The choice of one particular direction in Islamic worship is meant to secure unity of feeling in the congregation, and its form in general creates and fosters the sense of social equality in as much as it tends to destroy the feeling of rank or race superiority in the worshippers. From the unity of the all-inclusive Ego who creates and sustains all egos follows the essential unity of all mankind. The division of mankind into races, nations, and tribes, according to the *Qur'an*, is for the purpose of identification only: "O mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other." (49:13) The Islamic form of association in prayer, therefore, besides its cognitive value, is further indicative of the aspiration to realize this essential unity of mankind as a fact in life by demolishing all barriers which stand between man and man." (1)

There is no doubt that prayers in congregation do create among the Muslims a bond of love and mutual understanding. This arouses in them the sense of their collective unity and fosters among them international fraternity. All of them say their prayer in one congregation and this inculcates in them a deep feeling of brotherhood. Prayers are also a symbol of equality,

1. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp.93-94.

for the poor and the rich, the low and the high, the rulers and the ruled, the educated and the unlettered, the black and the white, all stand in one row and prostrate before their Lord. This also inculcates in them a strong sense of discipline and obedience to the elected leader. In short, prayers train them in all those virtues which make possible the development of a rich individual and collective life." (2)

Spirit of Jihad (Holy war)

There seems to be a close relationship between prayer and *jihad*. People who are being prepared for fighting in the way of God need to establish prayer and pay *zakat* more than training in weapons of war. Prayer is the best training for the goodliness, sincerity and discipline needed in *jihad*. If any group prepares its individuals for war without these qualities, it cannot achieve any betterment of the community. It may win battles and merely increase *fasad* (corruption, wickedness and immorality) on the earth for a time, but it can never succeed in the long run. This is why emphasis is laid on the establishment of the institution of prayer even under the very hard conditions of war: "When you travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayer, for fear the unbelievers may attack you. For the unbelievers are unto you open enemies. When you (O Messenger) are with them, and stand to lead them in prayer, let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with you, taking arms with them. When they finish their prostrations, let them take their positions in the rear. And let the other party come up which has not yet prayed... And let them pray with you, taking all precautions, and bearing arms. The unbelievers wish, if you were

2. Abul Ala Maududi, *Towards understanding Islam*, I.I.F.S.O., 1970. p.135.

negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush." (4:101-103)

The congregational prayer, even in danger in face of the enemy, is not ignored or neglected but performed with the same strictness. "Religious forms of *ibadah* should be a source of strength and not of weakness in all our affairs. If we have to struggle hard and suffer hardships, those without faith have to do the same, with this difference, that the man of faith is full of hope in prayer whereas the man without faith has nothing to sustain him." (3)

This is why prayer is performed with strict regularity even on the battlefield. For in Islam, war is fought not for bloodshed or plunder, but to end the aggression and *fasad* (evil) which is raised by the unbelievers to stop the servants of God from obeying His Commandments. Thus prayer is the real spirit of *jihad* and this makes it *ibadah*. Devoid of this spirit, it will also be *fasad* on the earth like the battles of the rebels of God. It is essential for the preservation of this spirit of *jihad* that prayer should not be ignored, as far as possible, even under very hard battle conditions. It will remind every *mujahid* of the reality that, as far as our objective is concerned, rows on the battlefield are no different from the rows in prayer. Second, it shows the importance of prayer in congregation: "If you fear (an enemy), pray on foot, or riding, (as may be convenient) but when you are in security, celebrate God's praises in the manner He has taught you." (11:139)

According to this verse, when conditions on the battlefield are extremely difficult and do not permit the performance of prayer in congregation,

mujahidin are allowed to offer their prayer individually, standing, or riding, or sitting, or running, or in any other position they find convenient. Even facing the direction of the *Qibla* is not imposed. But prayer in congregation must be maintained, when circumstances permit, even on the battlefield. The form of prayer the *Qur'an* mentions here achieves the objective of prayer as well as of defence. Third, it throws light on the great importance of prayer under conditions of war. The very fact that an important institution of *ibadah* like prayer can be shortened in these circumstances shows its necessity. The form of prayer suggested here takes the necessary precautions, so that the enemy may not get any chance to attack Muslims. In other words, the Commandment given to the *Mujahidin* in the above *Qur'anic* verse, "taking all precautions and bearing arms," must always be fully observed in prayer on the battlefield. This achieves a moderate and beautiful balance between trust in God (*tawakkul*) and human effort (*aml*), wisdom and bravery, impetuosity and prudent foresight in God, which makes prayer a form of *jihad*.

Fourth, it shows the importance of obedience to the Messenger of God. It has suggested a form of prayer which enables every companion to offer his prayer in congregation under the guidance of the Messenger without weakening the defence. All this is a clear indication of how the institution of prayer helps in the creation and nourishment of the spirit of *jihad*.

There is undoubtedly a great relationship between congregational prayer and *jihad*. In fact, daily prayer is a training for *jihad*. The Holy Prophet used to straighten rows of worshippers before every prayer and was very strict about this. "It is reported by An-Numan bin Bashir that God's Messenger used to straighten our rows as if he were trying to

make them as straight as arrows, until he saw that we had learned it from him." (4) Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, 'Straighten your rows, for the straightening of the rows is part of the *iqama* for prayer.' (5)

Umar, the second Caliph, was so strict in straightening the rows of worshippers in prayer that he used to hold a big stick in his hand and strike at the legs of any he found not standing properly in the row. This shows that daily prayer is a form of military drill which prepares Muslims for the eventual struggle against the enemies of Islam in peace as well as in war. Prayer is, in fact, a protective castle for the entire religion of God (*Din Allah*). In *Surah Al-Baqarah* after *tawhid*(unity), the first thing mentioned with regard to the Islamic Commandments is the prayer (2:177) and the chapter is closed with the words "Take great care of your prayers" (2:238). Herein, "after enunciating rules and regulations for ensuring social welfare and for leading a civilized life, God has impressed the importance of prayer as a finishing touch because it alone can produce fear of God and feelings of virtue and piety and create the attitude of obedience to the Divine Law and keep one on the right path. No one can remain firm in one's obedience to the Law of God without prayer, for one is liable to swerve into one kind of disobedience or another.

It will at the same time prepare and train the worshippers to fight in the struggle against the forces of evil with patience, fortitude, steadfastness and courage." (6)

This is a pointer to the fact that no other Commandment in Islam is as important as prayer. The

4. *Mishkat*, Vol.1, p.223 (Muslim transmitted it).

5. *Mishkat*, Vol.1., p.223 (Muslim transmitted it).

6. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol.1., p.174.

establishment, maintenance and survival of the entire *shariah* (law) is dependent upon its establishment and survival. God has given it the position of a castle for the establishment and protection of Islamic society. He who preserves and protects it in a way protects and preserves the whole *shariah*, and one who damages it, according to Umar, the second Caliph, destroys the rest of the religion (*Din*). The fact that prayer serves as a fence or a moat for the whole of the Islamic *shariah* is further explained in the following verse of *surah Al-Muminun*: "The believers must (eventually) win through, those who humble themselves in their prayers, who avoid vain talk, who are active in deeds of charity, and who strictly guard their prayers" (23:1-9).

Here again, some basic teachings of morality and religion are given, but they begin and end with an emphasis upon prayer. At the beginning of the verse, the word used is *khashu* (humbleness) which is the real spirit of prayer and at the end of the verse the word used is *hifaz* (guarding) which is a comprehensive word for all the outward preparation of prayer and its establishment. This is a clear indication that, in fact, it is the protection and preservation of prayer which is the real guarantee of the guarding of the other things of the religion (*Din*). Exactly the same is said in *Surah Ma'arij*: "Those who remain steadfast to their prayer, and those in whose wealth is a recognised right for the needy.... And those who guard their prayers." (70:23-34) Again the various basic teachings of Islam are given, but they begin and end with prayer. This emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of prayer shows the great part it is going to play in the training of the soldiers of Islam and in preparing them for the great struggle between the forces of Truth and evil. (7)

7. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol.1., p.507.

Respect for the Rights of Others

The prayer also teaches respect for other people and their rights. The believers go to the mosque regularly five times daily and meet many sorts of people who gather there for prayer. They stand together in rows, shoulder to shoulder, like a solid cemented structure and present a striking example of discipline, cohesion and affection. This develops in them love and respect for other people and their rights. They gradually feel for them the same kind of regard and respect as they do for their own brothers.

Whenever they are late for prayer, they find that they have to stand in the last row. This makes them realise the importance of time as well as the rights of other individuals. Whoever comes first occupies the first row by right and no one, no matter what his social or political status may be, can take his place by force. Even the poorest and the humblest of the believers is fully conscious of this right and will not forego it under any circumstances. As he enjoys his right with full consciousness, he learns to respect other people and give them the same right. It is a great Blessing of God that believers enjoy their rights and respect the similar rights of others without feeling any ill-will against them.

Tolerance

True believers also become tolerant and broad-minded through the establishment of prayer. They have to perform the ablution and then join other believers in the mosque for prayer five times every day. It needs a lot of endurance to stick to this rigorous discipline every day all the year round. They meet different sorts of persons, with different behaviour and different social status; some are poor, some are rich, some are arrogant, but they learn to

greet all with open hearts as brothers and friends. They gradually become more tolerant to other people with a higher or lower social status or holding different views from their own. They accept the fact that all people can't be alike in appearance, or in dress, or in religious or political views and that they have to live with them with kindness and tolerance in order to build a happy and peaceful community.

Prayer also enables an individual to endure the troubles he has to undergo in this life: "Nay seek (God's) help with patient perseverance and prayer" (2:45). God advises believers in hardship to strengthen their power and morale through prayer. It will build up their endurance for hardship, on the one hand, and their tolerance towards their enemies on the other. It will also help them to restrain their fear and anger against unbelievers and to tolerate all their mockery and ridicule with an open heart for the Pleasure of God.

Unity

The prayer is the best exercise to train people to unite and discipline themselves. It brings them together five times every day to remind them that they are brothers in faith: "The believers are but a single brotherhood, so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers. The enforcement of the ideal of brotherhood and unity is the greatest social ideal of Islam. They may speak different languages, belong to different ethnic and social groups or races, have different colours and different nationalities, but when they hear the call to prayer, they all gather together as brothers. All distinctions of race, colour, or nationality fade away in the unity of Islamic brotherhood.

The institution of prayer, if properly organised and established, can never let the Muslim community fall into disintegration and disunity. The prayer is the living, and the most effective, way of uniting believers into one solid block. The Holy Messenger rightly said that the Muslims are like one body: if one part of it is hurt, the whole body feels its pain: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other--- such is their likeness in the *Torat* and the *Gospel* like as sown corn that sends forth its shoot and strengthens it and rises firm upon its stalk, delighting the sowers (48:29)."

The Companions of the Holy Prophet were very mild and compassionate to each another. They always looked for an opportunity to sympathise with and help one another. Whenever anyone was missing from the congregational prayer, they used to go to his house to find the reason for his absence. They were really like one "solid cemented structure", which was united with the love and affection of Islam, and "held together in unity and strength, each part contributing strength in its own way, and the whole held together not like a mass but like a living organism." (16) The *Holy Qur'an* describes the state of the believers in these words: "Truly God loves those who fight in his cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure" (61:4).

In fact, true believers are helped to achieve this state of order, discipline, cohesion and courage through the regular establishment of daily prayer in congregation. And "the traces of their earnestness and humility are engraved on their faces, the face being the outward sign of the inner man. A good man's face alone shows in him the grace and light of God; he is gentle, kind and forbearing, ever helpful, relying on God, and possessing a blessed

peace and calmness that can come from no other source." (8)

These good qualities naturally show on a man's face owing to his prostrating before God. Man's face is an open book, in whose pages can easily be read the signs of the innermost self. The face of a proud man is quite different from that of a humble man and that of an immoral person from that of a decent and pious man. In short, believers' qualities of goodness and gentleness are quite obvious and distinguish them from other people in appearance.

The Holy Prophet has described these qualities of the believers on different occasions. "Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying that.... (*Rahim*) is a word derived from the Compassionate One (*Ar-Rahman*), and that God said, 'I shall keep connection with him who keeps you united and sever connection with him who severs you.'" (17) And A'ishah said that God's Messenger told her that ties of relationship are tied to the Throne and to say, With him who keeps me united God will keep connection, but with him who severs me God will sever connection." (9) Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "Whosoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, God will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Judgement. Whosoever alleviates the lot of a needy person, God will alleviate (his lot) in this world and the next. Whosoever shields a Muslim, God will shield him in this world and the next. God will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother." (10)

The prayer is a constant reminder to the believers

8. A. Yusuf Ali, op.cit, p.1539.

9. *Mishkat*, Vol.11, p.1025. (*Bukhari* and *Muslim* transmitted).

10. *Forty Hadith*, p.114.

that they are brothers in faith and so they must remain united as one single people, otherwise they will fall into disputes and their power and unity will shatter into pieces: "And obey Allah and His Messenger, and fall into no disputes, lest you lose heart and your power depart, and be patient and persevering." (8:46) Here the believers are commanded to give total obedience to God and His Messenger and show complete unity and discipline against their enemies. Whatever God has ordained or His Messenger has commanded you to do, obey without any hesitation. Just as dissension and disruption creeps into a heart devoid of remembrance of God (*dhi-kralah*), in the same way division and confusion spreads in a people when they half-heartedly obey their leader and their order and discipline slackens. They are promised God's help and assistance if they remember God and show unity and fortitude against their enemies.

The Holy Prophet greatly emphasised the necessity and benefit of brotherly relationships among the believers. According to Abdullah bin Umar, God's Messenger said, "The best companion in God's estimation is the one who is best to his companions, and the best neighbour in God's estimation is the one who is best to his neighbour." (19) And Muadh bin Anas reported God's Messenger as saying. If anyone guards a believer from a hypocrite, God will send an angel who will guard his flesh on the Day of Resurrection from the fire of Hell." And Abu Darda said that he heard God's Messenger say, "No Muslim will defend his brother's honour without it being due from God's to defend him from the fire of Hell on the Day of Resurrection." He then recited "It was due from us to help the believers (30:47)". Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "Each of you is the mirror of his brother, so if he sees any fault in him he should wipe it away from him--The believer is the believer's brother who guards

him against loss and protects him when he is absent." (11)

He also reported that God's Messenger said, "Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another, and do not undercut one another, but be you, O servants of God, brothers. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim, he neither oppresses him nor does he fail him, he neither lies to him nor does he hold him in contempt. It is evil enough for a man to hold his brother Muslim in contempt. For a Muslim, the whole of another Muslim is inviolable: his blood, his property and his honour." (12) And Abu Saeed Sa'd bin Malik bin Sin'an al Khudri reported God's Messenger as saying that "there should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm." (13)

Love and Affection

The prayer is a means of creating and developing love and affection among believers. All the Muslims of a locality meet daily for prayer. They begin to know each other better and forget any ill-feeling. Regular contact helps to break the barriers of strangeness and sow the seed of love and affection. The quality of their close relationship and love for each other is reflected in the verse of the Holy Qur'an (48:29).

Regular assemblies of Muslims for prayer also help in uniting them through the force of love and affection between them as explained in chapter V Section 6 of this book (49:10). The humility and love of the believers for their brethren in faith is again

11. *Mishkat*, Vol. 11., p. 1037 (transmitted by *Tirmizi* and *Darimi*).

12. *Forty Hadith*, p. 112.

13. *Forty Hadith*, p. 106.

described in *Surah Al-Maidah* in these word : "Soon will God produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him....lowly with the believers, mighty with the unbelievers." (5:57)

Due to the Blessings of God and regular establishment of daily prayers, the most remarkable ties of full brotherhood were established between the Muslims of the early period and there was not least jealousy on their part of the good fortunes of their brethren. This remarkable relation of love and affection is beautifully described in *Surah Al-Hashr* : "But those who before them had homes (in Medinah) and had adopted the faith, show their affection to such as come to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preferance over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls,---- They are the ones who achieve success. And those who came after them say: Our Lord; forgive us and our brethren who came before us into the faith, and leave not in our hearts rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed. Our Lord; You are indeed full of kindness, most Merciful (59:9-10)".

The close relationship between the believers cannot be better described than by the *hadith* from Abu Hamza Anas bin Malik that God's Messenger said, "None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." (14) Muadh bin Jabal told of hearing God's Messenger say that God Most High had said, "My love is due to those who love one another for My sake, who sit together for My sake, who visit one another for My sake, who bestow things on one another for My sake." (15)

14. *Forty Hadith*, p.56. (transmitted by *Bukhari* and *Muslim*).

15. *Mishkat*, p.1041 (*Malik* transmitted it).

And Abdullah bin Abbas reported God's Messenger as saying, "He does not belong to us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our old ones." (16) Abdullah bin Amr reported God's Messenger as saying, "Those who are merciful have mercy shown them by the Compassionate One. If you show mercy to those who are in the earth, He who is in the heaven will show mercy to you." (17)

16. *Mishkat*, p.1034 (*Tirimzi* transmitted it).

17. *Mishkat*, p.1034 (*Abu Daud* and *Tirimzi* transmitted it).

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

SECTION SIX

MORAL BENEFITS

INTRODUCTION

Deep reflection will reveal that the desire to rise to moral greatness is ingrained in human nature equally if not more strongly than a desire to gain material greatness. The only effective way to achieve this aspiration is to develop a close relationship with the Creator of all purity and the source of all morality. According to the *Holy Qur'an*, "God is entitled to all the perfect and excellent names (i.e., attributes), so call Him by the perfect and excellent names only and leave alone those who deviate from the Truth and use profanity in giving names to Him" (7:180). It is of extreme importance that man should rightly understand the concept of God and His Attributes because the nature of his relationship with Him depends and grows on the proper understanding of His Person. In the words of Maulana Abual Ala Maududi, "This admonition about giving names to God is of great importance, for different names reflect different concepts which people form of Him in their minds. It is obvious that people give such names to things as express their conception of them. The defects in the conception of things are reflected by the defects in the names and defects in the names show the defects in the conceptions. Besides this, man's relationships and his dealings depend on that particular conception which he forms about some one or some thing. The defect in the conception of things shows itself in the defect of one's relationship to it. On the other hand, if one's conception of a thing is correct and right, one's relationship to it will also be of the correct and right sort. The same is true in the case of one's relationship with God."

The error one commits in giving wrong names to God (whether for distinction with reference to His Attributes) is the result of one's error in the creed and in the conception of God and His Attributes. A man commits the same kind of error and to the

same extent in the formation of his moral attitude towards life that he commits in his creed and his conception of God. In fact, a man's attitude towards life is wholly governed by his conception of God and his relationship to Him and the universe. That is why God has Commanded the people (in this verse) to give most excellent names to Him and to refrain from giving wrong names to Him, for He is worthy of excellent names only. Therefore the best thing is to give Him excellent names because the results of the perversion of His names are most serious.

Excellent names are those names that point to the greatness, the supremacy, the sanctity, the purity and the perfection of His Attributes. It shall be deemed perversion of His Names to give Him such names as are below His Dignity, which are against the reverence due to Him, which ascribe defects and shortcomings to Him or mislead one to form wrong creeds about Him. Again it shall also be a perversion to give such names to any of His creation as are worthy of God alone." (1)

Man has an insatiable desire to rise higher and higher in all his activities, including morality. His aspiration to go up and up has no limit. He desires to amass all the wealth of the universe and still more, to wield all the power of the earth and still more. Thus his thirst for more and still more is never quenched. His aspiration in the field of morality is to attain perfect or near-perfect names and this he can achieve only by being in contact with God, the Fountain-head of Purity and Perfection and the Source of the highest morality. The prayer is a means of being in touch with Him, of developing a relation with Him and then of maintaining the close relationship with Him, Who possesses

1. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. 1V., pp. 91-94.

the most Excellent and Perfect Attributes and who is free from all defects.

The fact that man possess an unquenchable desire to rise to the highest point and possess the best of everything is shown by *Hadi'th* of the Holy Prophet. A Bedouin came to the Prophet and said to him, "O Messenger of God, I have come to ask you a few questions about the affairs of this world and the Hereafter." The Holy Prophet said, "Ask what you wish." He said, "I would like to be the most learned of men." "Fear God, and you will be the most learned of men," replied the Holy Prophet. He asked, "I wish to be the richest of men in the world." The Holy Prophet said, "Be contented, and you will be the richest of men in the world." He said, "I would like to be the most just of men." "Desire for others what you desire for yourself, and you will be the most just of men," replied the Holy Prophet.

Again the Bedouin said, "I want to be the best of men." The Prophet replied, "Do good to others and you will be the best of men." He said, "I wish to be the most favoured of men by God." "Engage much in God's praise, and you will be the most favoured of men by God," replied the Holy Prophet. He said, "I would like to be the most honourable of men." The Holy Prophet replied, "If you do not complain to any fellow creature, you will be the most honourable of men." He said, "I would like to be the strongest of men." "If you put your trust in God, you will be the strongest of men." replied the Holy Prophet." (2)

It is a natural desire of man to attain the perfect or the best of everything. Islam has provided the best way to quench this insatiable desire of man to acquire the best of everything. He can get closer to the Being who possesses the best and the perfect

2. Ahmad bin Hambal.

Attributes in prayer and become inspired with Divine Morals. He can retire from worldly engagements for a while and with full concentration open a dialogue with the most perfect Being through prayer. The prayer is, in fact, a dialogue between man and his Creator and an opportunity for man to open his heart before Him and to drink deep at that Source. (3)

Another point to be remembered in this regard is that "Man will not find Him (God) by taking his abode in remote or deserted spots or in mountain caves, but he will surely find Him in the midst of the stream of life, and so close to himself as he could see Him with his own eyes. Whosoever is tempted at every step by the material advantages to be derived from adopting unfair means, by opportunities for doing injustice and or in indulging in immorality, and who yet avoids them at every step through fear of God, he indeed does find Him, and in fact as good as sees Him, for how else could he have stood the temptation? Whosoever does everything, whether it be the pursuit of some hobby in his spare moments at home or something connected with the most serious affairs of his life, with the conscious feeling that God is not far from him, he does in fact find Him every moment near himself, and very near at that. Whosoever conducts affairs of state and of war and peace or of finance and industry and commerce which all severely try one's uprightness and adherence to scruples and is able successfully to shun the wrong ways to which the Devil is always trying to direct man's footsteps, and duly observes all the bounds and limits of God's moral law, who else can be stronger and truer of faith than he, and who else can know God better? Who else will win His favour and His Closeness, if not he?

3. For further details see under Communion with God in the last chapter of this book.

From the Islamic point of view, real spiritual development comes from controlling one's selfish and animal passions, from making the proper use of one's mental and physical faculties, from trying to acquire and practise the same moral qualities as we attribute to God, from resisting all moral temptations and from adhering strictly to the right path. The more one does this, the better will one become as a man, and the closer will one get to God. This, and nothing else, constitutes proper spiritual development. In other words, the more man is able to overcome his animal passions and work towards the highest ideals of humanity and the more he tries successfully to attain the ideal of winning God's pleasure by improving his morals and human qualities, the more will he achieve spirituality in its true sense." (4)

Guards Against Evil

The prayer supplies a very strong armour against evil. An individual is asked to practise prayer not because it will in any way benefit God or add anything to His Creatness, but because it is beneficial to him who prays. This is very clearly stated in the *Hadith* in which the Holy Prophet relates that his Lord said: "O My servants, you will not attain harming Me so as to harm Me, and you will not attain benefitting Me so as to benefit Me. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the Jinn of you to be as pious as the most pious heart of any one man of you, that would not increase My Kingdom in anything. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you the human of you and the Jinn of you to be as wicked as the most wicked heart of any one man of you, that would not decrease My Kingdom in anything. O My

4. *Worship in Islam*, by Abul Ala Maududi, *Criterion*, December, 1973.

servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the Jinn of you to rise up in one place and make a request of Me, and were I to give any one what he requested, that would not decrease what I have, any more than a needle decreases the sea if put into it." (5)

The prayer helps man to fight against evil with patience and perseverance. It is a prescription which improves and purifies one's self and helps one to attain high moral qualities and to build a strong defence against evil. The *Holy Qur'an* refers to this miraculous effect of prayer in these words: "Establish regular prayer, surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil. And certainly the remembrance of God is the greatest (force against evil)" (29:45).

The prayer has a great purifying effect upon human life. This verse gives the recipe to get rid of the slavery to sin and evil through prayer and remembrance of God. It is the most powerful and effective brake on the working of the machine of evil and indecency. "It is a living belief in the Divine Power, Knowledge and goodness that restrains man from walking in the ways of His Displeasure. A sure and certain knowledge that every evil action leads to an evil consequence, that there is a Supreme Being Who Knows what is hidden from human eyes and whose moral law is effective where the moral force of society fails, that He is the Source of all Goodness and that it is through goodness that man can have communion with Him, is the only effective restraint upon evil." (6)

How the prayer influences one's morals is very ably described by M. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi in these words:

5. *Forty Hadith*, pp. 81-82. (Muslim transmitted it)

6. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 768.

"The efficacy of prayer in restraining vicious desires and curbing lewdness and sensuality is equalled only by the confessional formula of *La ilaha illallah*. It is stated in the above mentioned verse of the *Holy Qur'an*. Prayer brings about a radical change in the moral and mental outlook of man and gives it a new orientation. It leads him from wicked to virtuous deeds and endues his heart with the love of faith. It makes apostasy, defiance of God and profligacy repugnant to him. But all this takes effect only when the prayer is real and genuine and charged with life, warmth and vitality. When Hazrat Shuaib gave the call to his people to follow the path of *Tawhid* (Montheism), piety and well-doing and warned them against the dreadful consequences of injustice, violation of the rights of others and cheating in weighing, they looked for the primary cause of the change that had come about in his life and came to the conclusion that it was the prayer they had seen him frequently offering up. God has provided prayer with a wonderful atmosphere of sanctity, reverence, fellow being and collectively to appreciate." (7)

It is prayer that makes man conscious of the Divine Being and His All-Prevailing Authority over us. This feeling of His Omni-Presence "purges us of anything (act, plan, thought, motive, words) of which we should be ashamed or which would work injustice to others. Such prayer passes into our inmost life and being, for then we realise the Presence of God, and that is true *dhikr* (remembrance), for remembrance is the bringing to mind of things as present to us which might otherwise be absent to us. And that is the greatest thing in life. It is subjective to us: it fills our consciousness with God. For God is in any case always present and knows all." (8)

7. *The Four Pillars of Islam*, p. 42.

8. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 1041.

In fact, there is a strong negative relationship between obscenity and the act of worship or prayer. Prayer is a powerful means of moral elevation and the purification of mind and heart. It purifies the heart of all evil and strengthens it to resist all temptations to commit evil. It is in this sense that a believer is told to recite the *Qur'an* and practise prayer, for these two things help him in building a strong character and powerful force which enable him not only to fight the strongest forces of evil but to defeat them. But this degree of excellence is attained only when his prayer is not confined to mere words and movements of the body but becomes engraved in his heart and the driving force for his action.

This verse further points out that prayer is an effective means of purifying one's self from the evils in which one is involved and the evils which exist in one's environment. Undoubtedly getting rid of moral evils is in itself a great virtue but it has also a great practical value. It enhances the prestige and goodwill of those people and gives them far greater superiority of character over others who are involved in various types of sinful activities in society.

A study of human history shows that the concepts of indecency and evil (*fahsha* and *munkar*) apply to those acts which have always been regarded as wrong and immoral by human nature. Every nation and every society, however corrupt and wicked they may have been, has always regarded them as immoral and bad. The people who abstain from these evils show sterling qualities that are recognised even by their enemies. They are far superior to their contemporaries in matters of discipline, duty, bravery, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, patience and perseverance, etc. And this strength of character commands respect from all. This is why the *Holy Qur'an*,

instead of asking the believers to prepare material means and forces, has asked them to establish regular prayer. This will give them that moral strength and force which will enable them to win the hearts of people and defeat their enemies without much struggle or fighting.

This quality of prayer, explained above, has two aspects: the essential quality and the required quality. The first quality restrains people from indecency and evil and the second one demands that the one who establishes prayer should restrain himself from acts of indecency and evil. The prayer undoubtedly does restrain people from evils. Anyone who cares to study the nature of prayer will realise that it is the most effective method of restraining man from evil. Who can suggest a better and more effective weapon to kill the beast of evil?

A man is called five times every day for the remembrance of God and is constantly reminded that he is not an independent being in this world but a servant of God. His God is One who knows all his activities, open or secret, even the plans and intentions of his heart. A day is to come when he is to appear before His Lord and answer for all his omissions and commissions in this life. Every prayer, in fact, teaches in a practical way that he should not do, even in secret, anything against the command of God. The entire performance of prayer is such that no one can know except God whether an individual has obeyed the Divine Law or not. For instance, if a man offers his prayer without *wudu*, or his *wudu* becomes void in prayer, none but God knows that he is not with *wudu*. And if a man has no intention of prayer and performs the outward movements of *qiy'am*, *ruku* and *sujud* without reciting any part of the *Qur'an* but, instead, reading verses of poetry, who can know except God that he has not offered his prayer?

In spite of this, if a man observes prayer five times a day with all the conditions laid in the *Qur'an* and *sunnah*, from cleanliness and purification of the body and clothes to the movements of prayer and the recitation of the *Qur'an* and remembrance of God, then it means that he is fully conscious of the Presence of God and his duty to Him. This daily routine develops a sense of duty and responsibility in him, it gives a new life to his conscience and makes him a decent and responsible being. It gives him regular practice and training to obey and follow conscientiously, in open, and in secret, under the influence of his own spirit of obedience, and without the existence of any external force, the Law in which he believes.

Now the question is: does a man actually stop committing sin after beginning to practise prayer? The answer to this question depends upon the man himself who is receiving this training of the purification of his soul. If he intends to benefit from it and makes every effort towards it, the purifying effects of prayer will be visible on him. Otherwise, it is obvious, no means of purification will be effective on him, if he is not prepared to accept its effects, or if he intentionally keeps on undoing its effects. It acts like food for the human body: its essential function is to feed and develop the body but this can be achieved only if the man allows the food to be digested properly and to have its effects. If a man vomits whatever he has eaten immediately after every meal, he will not benefit from his food. You cannot say in this case that his food does not feed his body because he is getting thinner in spite of regular meals. Similarly, you cannot say merely by giving an example of an impractical man who offers prayer that it does not restrain him from evil because he is sinful in spite of his regularity in prayer. It is more true to say that he does not practise his prayer, just as it is

more true to say of a man who vomits after meal, that he does not eat his meal.

This line of argument is supported by the *Hadith* of the Holy Messenger. Imran bin Hussain reports that the Holy Messenger said, "A man whose prayer does not restrain him from indecency and evil, his prayer is not prayer." (9) Ibn Abbas reports from the Holy Messenger, "A man whose prayer does not stop him from indecent and wicked deeds, his prayer has thrown him further away from God." (10) Abu Masud reports from the Holy Messenger, "A man who has not obeyed prayer has not performed any prayer. And obedience of prayer is this, that man should restrain himself from indecency and evil." (11) Imam Jaffar says that a man who wants to know whether his prayer is accepted or not should see how far his prayer has stopped him from indecency and evil. If he has stopped from evil and sinful life because of the prayer, his prayer has been accepted. (12)

The *Holy Qur'an* commands believers to establish regular prayer because it removes their evils: "And keep up prayer at the two ends of the day and in the first hours of the night. Surely good deeds take away evil deeds." (11:114) This verse clearly tells believers to establish prayer for it increases goodness and blots out the evil that is in them or around them in society. The best way to check the evils around you in society and the evil activities of your enemies is by attaining the maximum possible goodness and piety. And the best way to attain

9. Ibn Abi Hatam, quoted by the author of *Tafheem-al-Qur'an*.

10. Ibn Abi Hatam and *Tibrani*, quoted by the author of *Tafheem-al-Qur'an*.

11. *Ibn Jurair* and Ibn Abi Hatam, quoted by the author of *Tafheem-al-Qur'an*.

12. *Ruh al Muani*, quoted by the author of *Tafheem-al-Qur'an*.

goodness is to practise regular prayer. It will develop such high qualities in you that you will be able not only to combat the forces of evil but also to defeat them and, instead, establish a system of justice and goodness in society.

In Arabic, the sentence "surely good deeds take away evil deeds", is a very comprehensive one. The word *hasanat* is inclusive of prayer and all other good deeds belonging to its family. It means that you should keep yourself occupied in these good deeds (*hasanat*) because they will destroy all evils that may come from within or without. The ending words of this verse, that "it is a reminder to those who remember (their Lord)" point to the great value of prayer. It suggests that you don't consider the prayer as an ordinary thing; in fact, it is a great thing for those who understand. This reminder was necessary because not every man could easily understand the great significance of prayer in destroying evil. (13) Undoubtedly, the prayer "is a remedy for eradicating evil from the world. DO good deeds and defeat evil with them. The best way of making you virtuous is to practise prayer, which will remind you of God over and over again; which will produce those good characteristics in you that will help you fight successfully against the systematic and united front of evil that has been formed against the mission of the Truth. This will also enable you to establish practically the system of virtue and reform." (14)

The work of goodness and fighting against evil is full of hardships and obstacles and the *Qur'an* rightly advises believers to seek assistance through prayer and patience: "Seek help with prayer and patience. No doubt, prayer is a hard task but not

13. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, Vol. 4., p. 423.

14. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. V., p. 113.

for those obedient servants, who realise that at last they shall meet their Lord and shall return to Him." (2:45) Through prayer, believers are able to acquire moral strength, firmness of purpose and decision, determination and fortitude, moral discipline and self-control, which enable them "to proceed with patience and courage under afflictions, privations and temptations on the way they choose in accordance with the dictates of their conscience."

"*Salat* is a hard task only for the one who is disobedient to God and who does not believe in the Hereafter. But it is a joyful work for the one who is willingly and happily obedient to God and who believes that one day he will have to go before God, nay, it rather becomes hard for him to leave his prescribed prayer." (15) The Holy Messenger is therefore, asked to advise his people to establish prayer in these words: "And enjoin prayer on thy people and steadily adhere to it And the (good) end is for guarding against evil." (20:132) This verse shows the believers the best way to prepare themselves for fighting against evil. It also tells them that the happy end is for those who practise prayer in order to seek assistance to defeat the evil forces of this world. This verse seems also to imply that God has commanded you to practise prayer not because it will in anyway benefit Him but because it will do you good. It will create piety in you, protect you from the evil forces of falsehood and bring about true and everlasting success for you in this world and in the Hereafter. (16)

It further advises believers not to be disheartened by their poverty and weakness in comparison with the

15. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. 1. Abul Ala Maududi, pp. 66-67.

16. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali. pp. 901-902

wealth, Luxury and strength of the opponents, but to keep up prayer, for it will change their way of thinking, their standard of values and their centre of attraction. They will be contented with less but honestly acquired wealth, and will prefer goodness earned through Faith and fear of God to luxury and wealth obtained through indecency and unfair means. All this strength to endure hardships will come with the establishment of regular prayer. The Holy Messenger is told to pray for the granting of protection against sin and is also advised at the same time to strengthen himself through prayer: "So be patient, surely the promise of Allah is true, and ask forgiveness for fault and celebrate the praise of thy Lord in the evening and the morning (through prayer)." (40:55)

The word *istaghfir* used in this verse means the covering of a thing with that which will protect it from dirt. It will, therefore, signify "His granting of protection to His servants against faults or sins. It is made clear by Qastalani in his commentary of *Bukhari* that it means protection, and it is either a protection of the servant from sin or a protection from the punishment of sin. (17) It is, therefore, protection in the first sense that is meant here, protection from sins, a protection from the imperfection of human nature, which makes a man liable to sin unless he is protected by God. Thus it means protection against the commission of error, or sin. God advises the Holy Messenger and through him his followers, to practise prayer, for it is an effective means of protecting them against the commission of sins, or errors. If they keep up prayer, it will strengthen their character and develop such high moral qualities in them that they will be able to resist the temptation to commit sin or evil.

17. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali pp. 901-902.

People who come to God (in prayer) and ask for His forgiveness of their sins are forgiven. The prayer helps not only in receiving forgiveness of their sins but it also helps in removing evil from them. It gives them strength and courage to face all sorts of misfortunes, and hardships and the evil designs of their enemies. They show neither meanness nor timidity against evil forces, but stand as a rock until their enemies are defeated and all opposition is completely crushed.

The following verse of the *Holy Qur'an* refers to this important function of prayer in these words: "They said: O Shuaib; does thy prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practised, or that we leave off doing what we like with our wealth? Truly, thou art the one that forbearth with faults and is right-minded." (12 : 87) The opponents of the Holy Messenger Shuaib speak in sarcastic language and scorn spiritual and good things like prayer and worship. They insist that they would very much like the Messenger Shuaib to keep quiet and let them do whatever they like with their evil and wicked ways and don't like any interference in their sinful way of life. They argue that they are at liberty to do as they please with their wealth and property and that prayer or religion has nothing to do with their economic and commercial dealings.

This sort of argument is put forward by all those people who are drowned in evil and wickedness. As prayer is the first and most outstanding expression of goodness and piety, wicked people regard it as an alarm of danger. It is the primary quality of prayer that first, it restrains the one who performs it regularly from evil and wickedness and second, it teaches him to purify society of its evil. A believer will not be content with his own goodness and righteousness but will try to make

others good and righteous as well. For it is obvious that individual goodness cannot last or resist for a long time the social pressures of a wicked society. It is therefore, an essential duty of a true believer to remove evil from the community. A believer will continue his efforts to purify the community of its wickedness and will continue condemning and censuring indecent and sinful ways of life.

Thus objection to prayer by such people is not because one of their members is offering prayer but because this leads to constant admonition to others to be truthful and good. For it is the beginning of an unending chain of criticism of a corrupt society. This is why prayer is the foremost target of criticism and sarcasm in a corrupt society.

GOODNESS AND PIETY

Prayer is undoubtedly the most effective weapon for fighting against evil in society and the best means to ward off evil from an individual. But this is the negative aspect of prayer. Its positive function is to make people truthful and righteous, pious and virtuous, pure and good, so that they may become instruments for purifying society. The *Holy Qur'an* refers to this positive aspect of prayer in these words: "He indeed is successful who purifies himself and remembers the Name of his Lord and then prays." (87:14-15) Real success and prosperity, according to the *Holy Qur'an*, is for the one who attains purity and goodness. This verse tells us the means through which an individual may acquire it. It is prayer which enables man to attain that standard of goodness and piety enjoined by Islam: "Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord in secret and keep up prayer. And whoever purifies himself, purifies himself only for his own good ." (35:18)

This shows that prayer protects man from his moral weakness, guards him against evil in himself and develops his spiritual strength. In fact, it is a very powerful means of purifying man of his lower and mean carnal self and, instead, developing in him the nobler virtues of life. It lifts him from the depths of meanness and raises him up to the heights of goodness and piety. Prayer brings a man out of his animal self and adorns him with moral qualities of goodness, piety, love, affection, self-sacrifice etc., that render him an enviable object even for the angels.

There is only one way to crush the power of evil that is found in individuals as well as society. And it is this. That you should become more and more honest and pious and defeat the forces of evil

by your goodness. And the best way to attain goodness is by practising prayer. It will help you not only to fight against the organised evil in society but will also assist you and prepare you in defeating it and establishing, instead, a system of goodness and justice. In short, prayer is a means of strength for the righteous.

The *Holy Qur'an* praises the high moral qualities of the believers against the wickedness of the evil-doers in these words: "Surely man is created impatient...fretful when evil affects him, and niggardly when good befalls him.....except those who are steadfast in prayer." (70:18-22) This verse gives good news to those who practise regular prayer, that they will attain the highest degree of excellence and acquire the most valuable qualities of being faithful and righteous- will be charitable, truthful, chaste, true and honest in their dealings and most fearful of their Lord.

Moreover, it shows that the real source of good qualities and high moral values, which Islam wants to develop in its followers, is prayer. If it is performed properly in the right state of mind, fulfilling all its conditions, it will definitely produce the desired results on individuals, as described in the *Holy Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Holy Messenger. This is why the Holy Messenger described prayer as the real pillar of the building of *Din-Allah*. With its strength, *Din-Allah* is strengthened and with its weakness the whole superstructure of *Din* falls down.

There is no doubt that healthy development of human powers and faculties depends on the goodness of the inner self. If a man's inner self is purified of evil tendencies, it is likely to develop his faculties on right and healthy lines, And prayer is definitely a very strong and effective means of

purification of the heart, as is pointed out in the two verses of the *Holy Qur'an* quoted above (29:45) and (11:114). Therefore believers are told to purify themselves: "He surely is successful who purifies it (his soul) and he fails who corrupts it" (91:9). And the Holy Prophet said, "The key of Paradise is prayer, and the key of prayer is being purified." (1)

According to Abdullah as-Suna'bihi, God's Messenger said, "When a believer performs ablution, then rinses his mouth, the sins go out from his mouth; when he snuffs up water, the sins go out from his nose; when he washes his face, the sins go out from his face so that they go out from under his eyelashes; when he washes his hands, the sins go out from his hands so that they go out from under his fingernails; when he wipes his head, the sins go out from his head so that they go out from his ears; and when he washes his feet, the sins go out from under his toenails. Then his walking to the mosque and his prayer will provide extra blessing for him." (2)

Abu Dhar said that the Prophet went out in winter, when the leaves were falling, and took two branches of a tree whose leaves began to fall. Then he turned towards him and said, "A Muslim observes prayer for God's sake and his sins fall from him as these leaves fall from this tree." (3) Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "If one of you has a river at his door in which he washes himself five times a day, what do you think? Would it leave any dirt on him? The companions said that it would not leave any dirt on him (and that he would be perfectly clean). The Prophet said, "This is an example of the five prayers with which God blots off all the evils of man (and make him completely pure and good" (4)

2. *Mishkat*, Vol. 1, p. 67. (transmitted by *Malik* and *Nasai*).

3. *Mishkat*, p. 116. (*Ahmad* transmitted it).

4. *Bukhari*.

There are many sayings of the Holy Prophet which clearly state that prayer is a means of purifying the worshipper from evil tendencies from within and without. And the *Holy Qur'an* describes the state of such people in these words: "In it are men who love to be purified, and God loves those who make themselves pure (9:108)." Undoubtedly a true Muslim must be pure in body, mind and soul, and daily prayers help him to achieve this degree of purity and goodness. This is because the prayer is a form of remembrance of God and the latter is a very effective means of suppressing evil and thereby purifying the heart of unhealthy tendencies. The *Holy Qur'an* clarifies it in the following two verses: It is I Who am God, there is no deity but Me, so worship Me and establish prayer to remember Me, (20:14)." "And remembrance of God is the greatest thing in life without doubt (29:45)."

The real object of the prayer is that people should not neglect their obligations to God, Who is their Lord and Master and they are all His servants. The daily prayer is prescribed to remind them of the presence of God and their duties and obligations to Him. This remembrance suppresses evil tendencies in man and leads him to his moral advancement. The effective sanction of the presence of God in the prayer acts as a restraint upon his tendencies to break Divine Laws. The greater and the stronger the feeling of the Divine Presence in the prayer the greater and the more effective is the restraint upon his tendencies to break the Divine Law. Thus prayer by suppressing the evil tendencies of the worshipper, purifies his heart and soul of evil and leads him on the straight path to the growth of his inner self.

Another factor which greatly assists the worshipper to suppress feelings of evil and to attain goodness and piety is the fear of God. He is fully aware of

the fact that God is watching him and his activities all the time wherever he goes, openly or in secret, in light or in darkness. He cannot hide anything from Him. This belief of the worshipper that God is present everywhere and that He sees everything restrains him from breaking the Divine Commandments. It is the strength of this belief that determines the strength of his actions. The daily prayer is prescribed to strengthen this belief in the heart of the worshipper. The *Holy Qur'an* says: "Prayer restrains man from evil and unjust acts" (29:45). Without daily prayer, it is physically impossible to maintain the strength of this belief and, consequently, adherence to goodness and piety. If the heart of a worshipper is deprived of this feeling, how can he possibly adhere to goodness and avoid evil for fear of God in his daily life? The obvious recipe is the practice of daily prayer: to evoke and revive fear of God in the worshipper and strengthen his belief in the Omnipresent God so that he may walk in ways of goodness and piety and avoid evil. (5)

Honesty

Who can be more honest than a true believer who expects to meet his Lord on the Day of Judgement for final reckoning and to give full account of his omissions and commissions in this life? Who is fully aware of the Grandeur and All-Comprehensive Power of God, Who knows the open and the hidden and even the secrets of the heart? Who is completely obedient and submissive to His Command? And who has totally given himself and all his affairs to the Law of Allah? Who is true to Allah, the Unseen and obeys Him completely and meets Him five times daily in prayer? How can such a man be untrue in his worldly affairs? He follows, in word and deed, the 5. Abul Ala Maududi, *Fundamentals of Islam*, 1974, Lahore. pp.105-106.

teachings of God's Messengers, who were the most honest of all people: Moses said, "O Firaun; I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Worlds.....One for whom it is right to say nothing but truth about God." (7:104-105)

The followers of the Messenger are the most honest and truthful of all people: "Who establish regular prayer..such indeed are the believers." (8:3-4) Their belief in the Presence of God gets stronger and stronger through prayer and further strengthens their righteous character: "It is righteousness to believe in God,... to be steadfast in prayer such are the people of truth, the Godfearing " (2:177).

A beautiful description of the righteous and Godfearing man is given in the above passage from the *Holy Qur'an*. People who possess all those qualities and practise regular prayer are surely, without doubt, people who can be trusted in all matters. They have been put to the severest tests and have come out successfully with honour and glory. They have proven their truthfulness and, therefore, they can be relied upon in all matters under all circumstances: "We did test those before them, and God will certainly know those who are true from those who are false." (29:3) True believers have come out safely, purified but unharmed as from the goldsmith's melting pot in which the fire burns out the impurities and pure gold is left behind.

Such people are amply rewarded by God while the hypocrites are punished: "Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with God.. that God may reward the men of Truth for their truth, and punish the hypocrites." (33:22-23) The honesty and sincerity of the believers is judged by God and they are given their due reward. The dishonest and insincere, on the other hand, are punished

in accordance with their misdeeds: "So he gave nothing in charity, nor did he pray; but, on the contrary, he rejected Truth and turned awayWoe to thee." (75:31-35)

These are those who do not do good deeds and do not obey God and do not practise regular prayer in obedience to His Command, in fact, reject Truth and turn away from Him. And there are people who do all these things and practise prayer, in fact, accept and obey Truth from their Lord. They indeed are the righteous and truthful people, who can be trusted in all matters.

People who believe in the teachings of the God's Messengers and do good deeds and show mercy and forgiveness to their fellow creatures can never be untrue in their worldly dealings with people. All Prophets came with Truth and taught people Truth and honesty in all their affairs. "We have already shown clear signs to those who believe (what greater sign could there be than that). We have sent you with the knowledge of Truth and made you a bearer of good tidings and a warner " (2:119). The Prophet Muhammad was given the Truth as the Prophets before him were given the Truth and they preached the same thing to their people. "He has sent down to you the Book, which has brought the Truth and confirms the scriptures which preceded it. Before this, He sent down the *Torah* and *Gospel* for the guidance of mankind, and He has sent down the Criterion (of right and wrong). Now there shall be a severe punishment for those who reject the Commandments of God, for God is Almighty, Avenger of wickedness" (3:3).

The Holy Prophet is Commanded to judge between people according to the criterion of Truth revealed to him: "O Prophet, We have sent this Book to you with the Truth so that you may judge between people

in accordance with the Right Way which Allah has shown you. So do not plead for dishonest people, implore Allah's forgiveness, for Allah is Forgiving and Compassionate. You should not plead for those who are dishonest to themselves. Allah does not like the one who is persistently dishonest and sinful" (4:105). This verse of the *Qur'an* strongly condemns partisanship in matters of Truth and Justice. "It is sheer dishonesty that one should plead the cause of one's own party man, even though he may be in the wrong, and oppose the man of the opposite party, even though he may be right."

All the Prophets before Muhammad (p.b.u.h) brought the same Message of Truth and Justice which they gave to their people. So Prophet Salih left them saying. "O my people, I did indeed convey to you the message for which I was sent by my Lord. I gave you good counsel" (7:79). Prophet Shuaib said to his people, "O my people, worship God, you have no other God but Him. Now has come unto you a clear (sign) from your Lord. Give just measure and weight and do not defraud the people of their goods, nor spread disorder on the earth after it has been set right; this is better for you, if you are true believers" (7:85). Prophet Shuaib was sent to cure those people of their two main evils-idolatry (*shirk*) and dishonesty in trade. He therefore appealed to them, if they were true believers, to judge good and evil by the standards of righteous and honest people, and not by the standards of those worldly people who did not believe in Allah and the Hereafter." (6)

Prophet Musa (Moses) delivered the same Message to Pharaoh "We sent Musa with Our Signs to Pharaoh and the chiefs of his nation, but they also treated Our Signs unjustly. Musa said, 'O Pharaoh I am a

6. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. IV, p. 52.

Messenger from the Lord of the universe. It behoves me to say in the name of God nothing but the Truth (7:10-104)." Thus Prophet after Prophet was sent to various nations at various times since the time of Adam, the first man and first Prophet, to guide humans to the Path of Justice and Righteousness: "These people whose stories We recount to you (can serve as examples to you). Their Messengers came to them with clear Signs, but they would not believe in what they had denied.. And We found in most of them no respect for any Covenant, nay, We found that most of them were transgressors" (7:101-102).

As the believers are the true followers of God's Messengers and believe and practise with strict honesty and Truthfulness the Divine Teachings, they are Commanded to judge between people with Truth and Justice: "O Believers, God enjoins you to give the trusts into the care of those persons who are worthy of trust and judge with justice when you judge between the people. Excellent is the counsel that God gives you, for God hears everything and sees everything (4:58)." Here the Muslims have been forewarned that they should avoid those evils in which the children of Israel were involved. Their basic error was that during their degeneration they entrusted positions of responsibility and religious and political leadership to inefficient, incompetent, narrow-minded, immoral, dishonest and unjust people. As a result of this, the whole community had become corrupt. The Muslims are being cautioned against this evil and enjoined to entrust positions of responsibility to qualified and competent men of good moral character."

"Another evil that was prevalent among the Jews was injustice. They had lost the very sense and spirit of justice and become utterly unjust, openly dishonest, and sinfully obdurate and would commit acts

of gross injustice without any pangs of conscience. The Muslims were personally having a bitter experience of this. Allah warns the believers against this sort of injustice and enjoins them to always say what is just and judge between people with justice, whether they be friends or foes." (7)

God has enjoined Truth, and Justice for the people and not indecency and dishonesty: "Say to them, 'O Prophet, God never enjoins a shameful thing. Do you attribute to God's name things which you know not to be from Him? O Muhammad, say to them, My Lord has enjoined justice and righteousness'" (7:29). And the Prophet Muhammad was Commanded to be honest in his dealings even with his deadliest enemies, the Jews, and administer justice between them: "O Prophet, then judge with justice, for God loves those who act justly" (5:45).

The believers were also Commanded to be honest and just, even to their enemies: "O Believers, be steadfast in righteousness and just in giving witnesses for the sake of God; the enmity of any people should not so provoke you as to turn you away from justice. Do justice for it is near to piety. Fear God (in your affairs); indeed He is fully aware of what you do" (5:9). Justice, honesty and righteousness are of great importance in the life of individuals as well as peoples and without them no nation can survive for long. Therefore Islam has attached great importance to the establishment of a system of justice and piety in the community. It enjoins believers to be honest and just under all circumstance, even though it may go against themselves: "O Believers, be you the standard bearers of justice and witnesses for the sake of God, even though your justice and your evidence might be harmful to yourself, or to your parents, or to your relatives.

7. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. 11, p. 132.

It does not matter whether the party concerned is rich or poor, God is their best protector; therefore, do not follow your own desire lest you should deviate from doing justice" (4:135).

Believers are daily reminded by their prayer that they must uphold the Divine Commandment and carry out justice between people with the utmost honesty and piety, even though they may be their enemies. Hatred for any people should not make them forgetful of their duty to their lord. They must establish justice in society even if it may harm their own interests, or those of their parents or relatives. They must prove by their own deeds that they are truly the torch-bearers of Truth, Justice, and Righteousness. And the five daily prayers are reminders as well as a witness of their sense of honesty, piety and truthfulness.

Sincerity

Prayer cleanses the human heart of all impurities and evils and makes it sincere. A true believer practises prayer, recognising the Sovereignty and Lordship of God, in all sincerity, and offers Him complete obedience. His physical movements and postures, performed in all humility, are fully synchronised with the sincerity and lowness of his heart in prayer when he feels the Presence of his Creator: "And they have been Commanded no more than this: to worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in Faith); to establish regular prayer..." (98:5).

The right and true religion has always been to worship and obey God with all sincerity and never associate any partners with Him. A believer must come completely into the fold of God's religion. He should practise regular prayer and engage himself in the service of humanity.

A man should (1) conduct his life in accordance with justice and righteousness; (2) not show any sort of obedience, obeisance or servility to any other than God; (3) invoke God and none else, for guidance, succour, help and protection. He should, however, dedicate his entire life exclusively to God before invoking His help, for it is absurd to lead a life of idolatry, disbelief, disobedience, and slavery of others, and then invoke God, as if to say, O God, help me in carrying out successfully my rebellion against Thyself; (4) Above all, he should sincerely and firmly believe that he will be resurrected in the Next World, just as he has been given birth in this world, and then will be called upon to render on account of all his deeds in this world." (8)

A believer truly and sincerely follows the three principles of Islam: (1) sincere devotion to God, (2) establishing prayer and Praises of God to reach nearer to Him and to the spiritual World, and (3) serving God's creatures by deeds of practical charity. He is without doubt sincere in his Faith: "Being true and sincere in Faith to Allah, never assigning partners to Him; if anyone assigns partners to Allah it is as if he had fallen from the sky and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far-distant place." (22:31)

"In this parable 'sky' means the original human nature. Man by nature is the servant of none else but God and inherently accepts the Doctrine of *Tawhid* (unity). That is why the one who follows the guidance of the Prophets becomes firm in these dictates of his nature and soars higher and higher. On the other hand, the one who rejects God or associates a partner (or partners) with Him falls down

from the 'sky' of his nature. Then he either becomes a victim of Satan and evil leaders, like the birds of the parable, which snatch away the fallen man, or he becomes a slave of his lusts, passions, whims etc., which have been likened to the wind in the parable. They lower him down from one wrong position to the other till he falls into the deepest abyss of degradation." (9)

This is a nice description of two men: a man who is sincere in his Faith, stands firm and safe, and a man who is not sincere and who has fallen from the worship and obedience of God. He is like a man who has fallen from heaven because false objects of worship cannot hold him permanently in their grip. Sooner or later, he is thrown, by the Wrath of God, into a far place of darkness and oblivion where he is lost for ever. Prophet Ibrahim was one who was sincere in his devotion to God: "For me, I have set my face, firmly, truly and sincerely, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah." (6:79) The Holy Messenger Muhammad is Commanded: "Say thou: Nay; (I would rather) the religion of Ibrahim the true, and he joined not deities with Allah." (2:135). And God praises the quality of truth and sincerity of the Prophet Ibrahim in these words: "But he was true and sincere in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's and he joined not deities with Allah." (3:67) And again in *Surah Nahl*: "Ibrahim was indeed a model (and a community in himself) devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true and sincere in Faith, and he joined not deities with Allah." (16:120)

On account of his sincerity, devotion and truthfulness, he was *Ummat* (a nation) in himself, standing alone against the whole world. He suffered persecution and had to leave his home and his people, but

he attained spiritual wealth and God's Favours for his devotion and sincerity in Faith. "Say Allah speaks the Truth: follow the way (religion) of Ibrahim the true and sincere in Faith." (3:95)

This is meant to bring home to the people that sincere and total obedience to God alone is the root of the real Faith which was taught by Prophet Ibrahim. Your obedience to God and His Law must be total and complete. Besides, it should be given with all sincerity to Him alone, otherwise it will not be accepted by Him. Even if there is very tiny element of selfishness or insincerity, it will be rejected by God because the intention behind your action is the determining factor and is very important. According to Abu Hafs, Umar bin Khattab reported God's Messenger as saying, "Actions are but by intention and every man shall be judged by that which he intended. He whose migration (to Medinah) was for Allah and His Messenger, his migration was (considered to be) for Allah and His Messenger, and he whose migration was to achieve some woman in marriage, his migration was for that for which he migrated." (10) The Holy Messenger Muhammad was commanded by God to set his face truly and sincerely to the Faith in these words: "O Prophet and Prophet's followers! Set yourself exclusively and whole-heartedly to the true Faith; (establish) that natural pattern of Allah according to which He has created mankind. There can be no change in (the Laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right and true Faith (religion), but most men know not" (30:30). The word natural (فطرت) refers to man's innate character, which was created by God. As he comes from the creative Hand of God, man is innocent pure, true, free, inclined to right and virtue and endued with true understanding about his position

10. *Forty Hadith*, p.260. (Muslim and Bukhari transmitted it).

in the universe and about God's Goodness, Wisdom and Power. That is his true nature, just as the nature of a lamb is to be gentle and of a horse to be swift. But man is caught in the meshes of customs, superstitions, selfish desires and false teaching. This may make him pugnacious, unclean, false, slavish, hankering after what is wrong or forbidden, and deflected from the love of his fellow-men and the pure worship of the One True God. The problem before spiritual Teachers is to cure this crookedness, and to restore human nature to what it should be under the Will of God. (11)

This subject has been dealt with at considerable length by the Holy Prophet and many *hadith* are narrated about him. Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "Everyone is born a Muslim (i.e., on the natural pattern of God), but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian, just as a beast is born whole. Do you find some among them (born) maimed?" Then he said, God's pattern on which He created mankind; there can be no alteration in God's creation. That is the True Religion". (12) Ayadh bin Hamar Al-Mujashai reported God's Messenger as saying, "My Lord says that I have created all My servants on a true natural pattern (of religion). Then the devils misled them from the True Faith, and they made unlawful whatever I had made lawful for them. They ordered them to hold partners against Me that for which I had sent no clear Signs." (13)

Thus the Message of God to the people has always been to follow His Faith in all sincerity and truthfulness. And all the Prophet and their followers obeyed the Commandment of God with complete submission and

11. A Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, p.1059.

12. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.26. (Bukhari and Muslim transmitted)

13. *Tafheem-al-Qur'an*, vol.111., (transmitted by Ahmad) p.753.

utter sincerity. Every true believer obeys the Command of God with extreme devotion and sincerity and he is given regular practice to develop these qualities through the institution of prayer. God rewards His sincere servants with His Blessings and Favours: So he who gives (in charity) and fears (God) and (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him, the path of Bliss" (92:5-9). This life of success and bliss is promised to those who are sincere in their Faith. And who can be more sincere and devoted than the true believers who practise regular prayer, seeking their Lord's Favours and Presence?

The Holy Prophet Muhammad followed the model set by Prophet Ibrahim: "O Muhammad, say, As for me, My Lord has most certainly guided me on the Straight Way, the True Faith, Ibrahim's Way, which he had adopted exclusively and whole-heartedly and he joined not gods with God. Say, My prayer, My rites of worship (sacrifice) and my life and my death are all for God, the Lord of the universe, Who has no partner with Him. This is what I have been enjoined, and I am the first to surrender to Him" (6:161-163). This is the height of sincerity and submission; by offering his entire life to the Will and Command of God, the Holy Prophet was ready to accept what ever he was Commanded.

This is the real spirit of Ibrahim's Way of *millat-e-Islamia*, which is described in the above verse. Prayer and sacrifice point to the fact that whoever follows this True Faith lives and dies for God. There is no division in his life. So long as he lives, all his life activities are for the sake of God and when he dies, he gives his life for the sake of his True Faith. Thus his entire life, from the beginning to the end, is a story of extreme sincerity, sacrifice and service in the cause of Islam. The Holy Prophet commanded his people to follow the same example of sincerity, sacrifice and

truthfulness which he himself was commanded to follow: "O Prophet, say, 'O mankind; If you are still in doubt concerning my Faith, know that I do not worship those whom you worship beside Allah, but I worship Allah alone, Who has the power to cause your death. I have been commanded that I should be of the believers. I have also been commanded to dedicate myself sincerely, and exclusively, and steadfastly to this Faith, and not to be at all of those who associate other goods with Allah'" (10:104-105).

"The force of the Arabic words of the text (أَقِمَّ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا) 'Dedicate yourself sincerely, exclusively and steadfastly to this faith', is worth consideration. For the literal meaning of (أَقِمَّ وَجْهَكَ) is set your face steadfastly', which implies, 'you should steadfastly turn your face in one direction only, without turning it even slightly to right or left, or backward, and go on marching in the same direction'. Though these words were in themselves quite sufficient, the addition of the word *hanifa* (حَنِيفًا) made it all the more forceful. And *hanif* (حَنِيفٌ) is one who turns away from all others and exclusively turns in one direction. Thus what God demands is this: 'Adopt this Faith, this Way of Worship of God and this Way of life in such a manner that your worship, subjection, submission, servitude and obedience should be dedicated exclusively to God, the Lord of the universe; so that you do not deviate in the least after adopting this Way, you should have nothing to do with those ways that you have discarded and you should not even look at the crooked paths that erroneous people follow'.

"The negative way of forbidding *shirk* has been purposely adopted. It implies this: 'You should not at all be one of those who set up in any way whatsoever other gods as partners with God in His Essence,

His Attributes, His Rights and His Power, whether that god be one's ownself or another man or a group of men or some spirit or *jinn* or angel or some material or imaginary being'. The demand of *Tawhid* has been made both in the positive form, 'Dedicate...Faith', and in the negative form, 'and be not...other gods with Allah'. Thus it forbids *shirk* both in creed and in deed, in individual and in collective life, in places of worship and in education, in courts and in legislative assemblies, in political and in economic activities. Therefore it demands from the worshipper of *Tawhid* to adopt a different way in every aspect of life from the way of those who adulterate God-worship with ungodly worship, for the former can never be a fellow-traveller with those who practise *shirk*. As such things can never be expected from him, it can never be imagined that he would follow them. Thus it is clear that it cuts at the very root of *shirk*, both (*jali*) open and (*khafi*) hidden." (14)

Obedience to God in the way described above, avoiding all forms of idolatry (*shirk*) open and hidden, requires extreme sincerity and truthfulness on the part of the worshipper. A little doubt or element of insincerity can burn the entire harvest of faith leaving nothing in the hands of the worshipper. In the above verse of the *Qur'an*, 'Worship of God, in all sincerity comes as a direct Command from God to the Prophet and through him to all the people of the world (16:123). And people who are sincere and devoted to their Unseen God are most sincere in their business dealings and practical relationships in their private and public life. History bears witness to the fact that Prophets and their followers were the most honest, sincere and truthful persons of their times. It was their sheer sincerity and truthfulness that made them succeed against heavy odds.

14. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. V, pp. 61-62.

اَرْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً
فَادْخُلْ فِي عِبَادِي ۝ وَاَدْخُلْ جَنَّتِي ۝

SECTION SEVEN

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

Convey this to them O Prophet; perhaps they may be guided aright" (2:186).

This verse clearly points to the possible spiritual relationship between man and God and tells him: "Though you cannot see Me and feel Me with your senses, you must never imagine that I am far from you. Nay, I am so near to every servant of Mine that he can invoke Me and place his requests before Me wherever he may be. I hear and answer even those requests which are not expressed in words but are made only in his innermost heart. As to the false and impotent gods you have created in your ignorance and folly, you have to go to them, and even then they do not hear and answer you. But I am I, the Sovereign, the absolute Ruler of the boundless universe and Possessor of all the powers and authority, so near to hear and answer you that you need no recommendation or intercession for making any request anywhere and any time you like. Therefore you should free yourself from the folly of running from door to door after false gods and accept My invitation and turn to Me and trust in Me and submit to Me and become my servant ('abd')." (2)

After this invitation from the Lord of the universe if a man still turns his back on Him and run after false gods, it is the height of foolishness on his part. Just imagine the happiness and joy of an ordinary person if he received an invitation from the President of the United States or King of Saudi Arabia that he may come and meet him any time he likes and that all his requests and demands will be fully met. Here it is not the President or King of one country but the Sovereign of the Universe, the Owner of all wealth and power, Who is extending this invitation to every man, even the humblest of them,

2. Abul Ala Maududi, *The meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. 1, p. 141.

to come and ask for anything he likes, Remember; the Power of the Creator to bestow anything upon any of His creatures is not limited but beyond measure. Man receives an invitation from Him and it is up to him to answer the call and develop a close relationship with Him through prayer.

To attain this consciousness of the Divine Presence within ourselves, our belief in the Unseen God must be expressed in some physical form, turning it into a certainty of the Divine Existence, and this is only possible in prayer. Thus prayer helps man to convert his image of the Unseen God, Who can not be perceived by his physical eye, into a firm reality. Man thereby becomes conscious of the Divine Presence within himself.

The realization of the Divine Presence is further strengthened and made possible when man not only believes in the Unseen God but also regards himself as a humble servant ('abd) of God. "This continuous reminding is necessitated by the fact that concealed in man's soul (*nafs*) is a devil who continuously says; "You are my slave." And there are millions and millions of devils spread all over the world and each of them tells man: "You are my slave." The wizardry of these devils (existing both in the form of men and in the unseen) cannot be resisted unless a man reminds himself several times a day that he is not a slave of Satan but of God." Thus prayer performs a wonderful job of strengthening a man's belief in the Unseen God, turning it into reality in the form of realization of the Divine Existence within himself and also constantly reminding him that he is a humble servant ('abd) of God. Gradually belief in the Unseen God and consciousness of man's own position as His humble servant, each strengthening the other, lead him to that state in the prayer where he is able to feel the Divine Presence within himself and to enjoy the ecstasies of Divine

Contact in various forms.

The verse quoted above, 'I am indeed close to them', also points to the fact that man's nearness to God depends more on the condition of his heart than anything else. If he is careless and forgetful of His Lord, then there is nothing farther removed from Him than that man, but if he turns to Him, fills his heart with His remembrance, expresses gratitude for His many Gifts and Blessings and prays to Him in humility for fortitude and steadfastness in trials, then there is none nearer to God than that man. Though this nearness is accessible to men all the time, it is particularly so in prayer when they are actually engaged in 'creative' dialogue with Him. The words, 'I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me', are also very significant. When man calls his Lord, He answers the call of His servant. It may be an actual answer to that call or may signify the acceptance of his prayer or request in one form or another. It is very improbable that man should call on his Lord for help and should not receive His help. But it is essential that man should call on his Lord with complete sincerity and humility if he is to be answered. In these circumstances, when God listens, accepts and answers the prayer of His servants, it is also obligatory upon them to hear His call and believe in Him. In other words, belief in God and acceptance of His Call (or Message) is fundamental to the Divine-human dialogue. This is necessary for the right guidance of man, otherwise he may go astray.

This relationship with God has another important aspect. The idea of the sharing of roles between the Creator and the creature (*'abd*) is fundamental to the prayer, according to Ibn Arabi. (3) God was

3. Henry Corbin, op.cit, p.247.

hidden in the 'solitude of His Unknownness' until He revealed Himself. "I was a Hidden Treasure, I yearned to be known" (*hadith*). In other words, the Divine Being needs His servants (*ib'ad*) in order to manifest Himself, and the servants need the Divine Being in order to be invested with existence. Thus the servants who are created by God and exist through Him have become the means through which God manifests Himself. So there is reciprocity between the Creator and the creature so that 'the role is shared between Him and His servants. This mutual relationship, according to Ibn Arabi, is the basis of various forms of manifestation (*zahir*) and Divine vision (*tajalli*) for the servants and prayer itself is a moment in, a recurrence par excellence of, creation (*tajdid-al-khalq*)' of such inner experiences. (4) Thus prayer is the beginning of the development of the spiritual world in the heart of the servant and has immense opportunities of outstripping the bounds of the world of matter.

As this relationship becomes more intimate through prayer, the Sovereign God informs His servant that he can call upon Him whenever he wants and ask from Him whatever he needs without hesitation. His door is always open to those of His servants who are sincere and faithful in their devotion to Him: "Call you, then, upon God with sincere devotion to Him" (40:14). This open invitation from the Sovereign to His subject is subject to two conditions. First that the subject must submit himself completely to his Lord and second that submission must be sincere and voluntary. He must come to his Lord with complete humility of his own free will, recognising that He is the Real Sovereign and Lord of the universe and that there is no other person like Him. This requires of Him complete obedience to His Command. When the servant accepts Him in this sense, he is

4. Henry Corbin, p.246 and 257.

given free permission, to call upon his Lord for any of his needs at all times. This intimate relationship between the Sovereign and His subject develops, and is maintained, through prayer,

The Holy Prophet Muhammad was Commanded to invite people to His kingdom where people are judged by their sincerity and faith and not by their worldly possessions: "O Muhammad, say to them, 'Invoke Him Alone, dedicating your faith sincerely and exclusively to Him' (7:29). This is because only right and sincere devotion can bear fruit. It clearly shows that God's general invitation to free audience with Him is always open to all His servants provided they fulfil the condition of complete submission with sincerity. Their devotion "should be exclusively directed towards Allah and there should be absolutely nothing of idolatry (*shirk*) in it, that is, he should not show any sort of obedience or obeisance to any other than Allah." "He should invoke Allah, and none else, for guidance, succour, help and protection. He should, however, dedicate his life exclusively to Allah before invoking His help, for it is absurd to lead a life of disbelief, disobedience, and worship of others, and then invoke Allah, as if to say, 'O God, help us in carrying out successfully our rebellion against Thyself' (5)

Allah's Messengers were more closely and intimately related to Him than other people. They had, in fact, a very close relationship with Him and could contact Him for guidance or other matters at any time without any difficulty. Their constant remembrance of Him through prayer and otherwise had brought them spiritually very close to Him. There were practically, as far as is possible for man, no barriers left between them and their Creator. The Holy prophet

5. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, Vol. IV. pp. 19-22.

is, therefore, Commanded to call his people towards Him on the basis of his own first-hand experience of Divine closeness: "Tell them plainly, 'This is my way. I invite you to Allah. I myself see my Way in full light and my followers see it, too. And Allah is free from any weakness or defect, and I have nothing to do with those who practice *shirk*'" (12:108). And again in *Surah Ar-Ra'ad*, "tell them plainly, I have been commanded to worship Allah alone, and prohibited from setting up a partner with Him. Therefore I invite you to Him and I turn to Him." (13:36)

It is clearly laid down in these verses of the *Holy Qur'an* that Divine relationship depends on man's complete submission and obedience to His Commands without any reservation. This relationship cannot be maintained by the Real Sovereign and Ruler of the universe with His rebels. This is a great favour of the Lord reserved for His obedient and faithful subjects. As pointed out in another verse (40:60) God has the authority and power to accept or reject the prayers of His subjects but He accepts them from His faithful servants who call upon Him with sincerity and humility, and grants them His favours. Obviously, man turns to Him in prayer when he finds that physical means are not sufficient to meet all his needs or remove all his troubles and difficulties. He is fully convinced that God alone is All-Powerful, is everywhere and sees everything, open or hidden, in daylight or in darkness, and that He alone can fulfil all human needs and remove hardships.

There are many sayings of the Holy Prophet which confirm that no one but God can meet human needs and that He likes His faithful subjects to come to Him and bring Him all their requests. It is narrated by Sulman Farsi that the holy Messenger said, "Nothing can avert (or change) the Divine Decree (i.e., destiny)

except prayer." (6) In other words, no one has any power to alter the decision of the Almighty, but He Himself can change His decision and it happens when any of His servants prays to Him. Abu Saeed Khudri reported God's Messenger as saying: "When any man prays to God, he is either granted what he has prayed for or any of his troubles of the same degree is averted from him provided he does not pray for sinful act or for severing the bonds of kinship (*qata'rahmi*). Allah accepts his prayer in any of the three forms: He is either granted his request in this world, or it is reserved for him on the Day of Judgement, or any of his hardships of the same degree is averted from him. (7)

Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying: "There is nothing more respectable (honourable) in the eyes of God than prayer." (*Ibn Maja and Tirmizi*). (7) Ibn Masud narrated that God's Messenger said, "Ask for Allah's bounties and favours from Him for He likes that (His servants) should ask from Him." (*Tirmizi*) (8) Anas reported God's Messenger as saying; "Every one of you should ask Allah for all your needs so much so that even for the broken lace of your shoe you should ask Him. In other words, even for our very ordinary needs we should ask for His help because none of our efforts or plans can succeed without His help or support. Besides, in prayer a worshipper admits Sovereignty of Allah and his humility and helplessness before Him. (*Tirmizi*). (9)

6. *Tirmizi*, quoted by Abul Ala Maududi, *Tafhim-al-Qur'an*, vol. 1v. p. 421.

7. *Musnad Imam Ahmad*, quoted by Abul Ala Maududi, *Tafhim-al-Qur'an*, vol. 1v. pp. 421. 422.

8. *Mishkat*, vol. 1., p. 472. (*Tirmizi* and *Ahmad* transmitted)

9. *Mishkat*, vol. 1. p. 473 (*Tirmizi* transmitted it).

Ibn Umar reported God's Messenger as saying, "Prayer is beneficial regarding things which have happened as well as things which have not happened, so devote yourselves to prayer, servants of God." Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "God will be angry with those who do not ask of Him (their needs)". (9) Ibn Umar narrated that God's Messenger said, "If the gate of prayer is opened for any of you, the gates of mercy will be opened for him, and God is not asked for anything He likes so much as to be asked for security." (9) Abu Hurairah reported that God's Messenger said, "If any one finds pleasure in receiving an answer from God in times of difficulty, he should pray Him often when times are easy for him." (9) And Sulman reported God's Messenger as saying, "Your Lord is bountiful and generous, and is ashamed to turn away empty the hands of a servant when he raises them to Him (in prayer)." (9)

Therefore, the Holy Prophet is Commanded: "O Muhammad, say to them, 'This way alone is My Right Way, therefore you should follow this Way and should not follow other ways lest they lead you astray from His Way. This is what Allah has enjoined on you so that you may avoid crooked ways' (6:153). In these words, man's 'natural covenant with God' "demands that man should follow the Way shown by Allah, because any deviation from it into the paths of rebellion or independence or in the worship of someone else other than God will be the first violations against that covenant, and will mislead one into other violations one after the other. Beside this no man can fulfil the obligation of this most delicate and vast and intricate covenant unless one accepts the Divine Guidance and follows it in every aspect of life....."You should not follow other ways' because they will turn you away from His Right Way, which is the only Way which leads to His nearness, pleasure and approval. Moreover, when the people deviate

from His Right Way, each man has to make his own choice out of the hundreds of other ways. Thus all the people are scattered in all directions and there is bewilderment, confusion and disorder among all mankind and this becomes a hindrance in the way of all real progress, and development." (10)

"This Right Way' does not fully express the meaning of *Sawa as-sabil*. It is that way of life which enables a man to develop harmoniously all his powers, faculties, and abilities, which satisfies all his cravings, urges and feelings and the demands of his body and soul in a congenial manner: which guides him rightly to keep balance the many complex relations with all other human beings: which leads him individually and collectively to exploit and use equitably the natural resources for his own good and that of humanity. In short, it is that way of life which enables the individual and the society to solve spiritual, moral, social, physical, economic, political and international problems in a straight, smooth, even and just manner.

"It is obvious that man with his limited powers and intellect cannot by himself solve these problems, as he is simply incapable of comprehending at one and the same time all the aspects of human problems so as to weigh and estimate their relative importance and judge between the different courses before him. That is why, when even he has tried to plan a way of life for himself, he has utterly failed to do justice to his own self or his society, and made a mess of all his affairs and problems, and created a state of chaos everywhere. This is because with his narrow vision he becomes so absorbed in one basic need out of many and one problem out of many that he loses sight of all others and neglects them intentionally or un-intentionally. As a result of

10. *The meaning of the Qur'an*, vol. 111, p. 171.

this, life loses its balance and begins to rush towards one extreme. When this state of affairs becomes unbearable, one of the neglected needs or problems takes hold of man and life begins to rush towards another extreme with the same distinctive result. In this way, life goes on running from one extreme to the other and man never finds the balanced middle way which is 'the Right Way', because all the ways planned by him keep running in wrong direction from one extreme to the other."

"As has been pointed out, man cannot plan that right way which may lead him clear of the pitfalls of the myriad wrong and crooked ways, so God has very generously made arrangements for showing the right way to mankind. He sent His Messenger with Guidance to lead mankind to the right way to real success in this world and in the Hereafter, and the one who loses this way will go wrong here and act wrongly, and inevitably go to Hell in the next world, for all the wrong ways lead to Hell. In this connection, it will be pertinent to point out the blunder that has been committed by some so-called philosophers. When they noticed that human life was continually running between two extremes, they came to the wrong conclusion that the Dialectical process was the natural way of the evolution of human progress. According to them, internal contradictions are inherent in all things and the struggle between these opposites and their synthesis constitutes the contents of the process of development. They apply the Dialectical methods to the study of the social life and come to the wrong conclusion that the same is the right way of evolution. Accordingly they start with a thesis of an extreme nature for the solution of a problem and go on rushing away from the Right Way towards one extreme till they discover, to their dismay, that in this process gross injustice has been done to some other equally important problems. Then they turn back with the

antithesis of the first theory and presume that the synthesis of the two will help evolve its right solution. Though it is true that the struggle between the two opposite theories helps them approach the Right Way, yet they cross it rapidly towards the other extreme because they do not believe in Divine Guidance which alone can make one firmly adhere to it. Then they do gross injustice to some other problems and the same process is repeated over and over again. If such short-sighted philosophers had not rejected God and religion and made an impartial study of the *Qur'an*, they would have discovered to their joy that the Right Way is the straight path, leading to human evolution, and not the myriad crooked and curved paths. Thus, they would have saved mankind from continually rushing aimlessly between extremes." (11)

The *Qur'an* refers to the ungrateful people who beg Mercy from God when in trouble but transgress on the earth when their affliction is removed: "When some trouble touches man, he cries unto his Lord, turning to Him in repentance, but when He grants him a favour from Him, he forgets what he cried and prayed for before, and he sets up rivals to Allah, thus misleading others from His Way" (39:8). These verses clearly point to the fact that man's real and genuine success and prosperity depends on his voluntary acceptance of the Sovereignty of God. This belief in God and recognition of His Authority and control over all matters of man, and that man, is His humble and faithful servant is the key to his relationship with Him. The stronger the belief, the deeper and closer is the relationship of man with his Creator.

11. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol. 111, pp. 25-27.

REMEMBRANCE OF GOD (*Dhikr Allah*)

The *Holy Qur'an* has used the word *dhikr* to convey different meanings. It may simply mean reminding some one of something, or remembrance of someone, or dialogue (i.e., prayer). The word *dhikr* has been used in all these meanings in the *Qur'an*. Sometimes it is used to remind the believers of their duties to their Lord and their accountability for their actions on the Day of Judgement: "But does not the man remember that We created him before when he was nothing" (19:67). On various occasions it is used for remembrance of God: "Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allah" (26:227). It is also used for prayer on different occasions: "But when you are in security, remember Allah in that manner He has taught you, which you did not know before" (2:239).

Now we will discuss the word *dhikr* in all these meanings one by one.

The word *dhikr* means to remember, to praise, and here it means remembrance of God, praise of God, or invocation of God, to cherish His memory as a precious possession. In fact, it refers to that state of mind of believer in which he is conscious of the Presence of God with all His Grandeur and Glory and All-Comprehensive knowledge. "It represents both a solemn ritual and a spiritual state of mind or heart, in which the devotee seeks to realise the Presence of God. Thus there is *dhikr* of the mind and *dhikr* of the heart. For beginners the one may lead to the other, but in many cases the two may be simultaneous." (1)

In order to bring man into the obedience of God, the realisation that he is a servant of God and that he

1. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 61.

has to live and work in that capacity on the earth must always be kept fresh, alive and active in his mind. It needs continuous reminding for God is invisible and far above the understanding of human senses; whereas the devil is in man's self and is always trying to make him his own servant. And there are hundreds and thousands of devils in human form who are constantly working to mislead him and lure him from the path of righteousness.

The *Holy Qur'an* reminds man again and again of his duties and responsibilities and of his accountability on the Day of Judgement to the Lord of the universe. "And O Muhammad, thus We have sent this down as an Arabic *Qur'an*, and have given therein various ways; perhaps these people may attain *taqwa* (piety) or that this may help arouse understanding in them" (20:113). In other words, it may awaken them from their carelessness and thereby help them realise their faults and the consequences of them. All the Messengers of God gave similar warnings, reminders or admonitions to their people so that they would realise the consequences of their evil doings and return to the right ways of life. "Prophet Hud said to his people: 'Remember the time when Allah made you successors after Noah's people and made you very robust. So remember the benefits you have received from God; it is expected that you will attain success' (7:69). Similarly Prophet Salih said to his people: 'And remember the time when Allah made you successors of 'Ad and established you in the land with dignity and enabled you to make castles on the plains and carve out houses in the hills. So do not be neglectful of the manifestations of Allah's power' (7:74). In these words God's Messengers gave warnings to their people of the evil consequences of their bad ways.

In *Surah Nahl*: "Allah enjoins justice, generosity and kind treatment with kindred and forbids indecency,

wickedness and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may learn a lesson" (16:90). In *Surah Yunus*, the reminder is given to the people: "That is Allah, your Lord, so worship Him. Will you not then understand or receive admonition? "(10:3). This is to emphasise the Power and Majesty of God, that none can interfere with His Affairs or change His Decrees. What they must do is to obey His Commands and submit His Will. Then if they make a supplication to Him and ask of Him anything, He may grant it to them. "O Prophet, continue admonishing, for admonishment benefits the believers" (51:55). The Holy Prophet is told to continue his teaching; perhaps it may be useful reminder to the people but it will certainly benefit those who believe. Besides, man is by nature forgetful and needs continuous reminders of his duties and function on earth.

The realisation that he is a servant of God and that he is to obey none but Him slowly escapes from his mind. To keep it fresh and alive, mere verbal confession or faith is not enough. It is absolutely essential that it must be continually strengthened and refreshed by objective means. This is what prayer does. "The various poses that you assume during your prayers are the very embodiment of the spirit of submission; the various recitals remind you of your commitments to your God. You seek His guidance and ask Him again and again to enable you to avoid His wrath and follow His chosen path. You read out from the Book of the Lord and express witness to the Truth of the Prophet and also refresh your belief in the Day of Judgement and enliven in your memory the fact that you have to appear before your Lord and give an account of your entire life." (2)

Early in the morning, before anything else, it reminds him of his duty. Then right in the middle of

the day, when he is busy in his work, it brings him back from his professional engagements for a few minutes to remind him that he is a servant of God. Again in the evening, when it is time for recreation and other pleasurable pursuits of life, it reminds him of the evil designs of the devil. And when he retires from the day's work and prepares to rest, it reminds him again of his duty to his Lord.

This is the first benefit of prayer and for this reason the *Holy Qur'an* calls it *dhikr* which means reminding. If prayer had no other function except this, then it would still be sufficient to make it a major pillar of Islam. The more you think of the importance of this benefit the more you are convinced that it is practically impossible for man to live and work in this world as a servant of God without this constant reminder through prayer. The prayer is, in fact, a very effective means of keeping the memory of God always fresh and alive in one's mind.

The word *dhikr* is also used for remembrance of God but in a very comprehensive way. It may mean mere endless repetition of certain Divine Words, or, if taken in its literal sense, may mean remembrance which signifies deeper understanding of the Divine Names and Divine person. It is called *dhikr* of the heart' or 'inner *dhikr*'. It is very hard to tell when it is used in the former sense in the *Qur'an* and when in the latter sense, because the word *dhikr* may convey both meanings at once. The faithful may be expected to repeat the Divine Words continuously so that this may help engrave their spiritual effect on their heart. There is no doubt that repetition is the first step towards remembrance. Besides, for beginners it is a good practice to master the technique of making the Divine Words remain in the heart permanently both as words and meanings. And gradually, they will come to understand the real meaning of

the Divine Words and Divine person.

In *Surah Al-Imran*, the *Qur'an* mentions those who constantly remember God: "Men who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, and reflect upon the wonders of the creation of the earth and the heaven. (Then they cry out spontaneously), "Our Lord, you have not created all this in vain, for you are free from doing such a thing" (3:191). This kind of remembrance helps the believer to understand the significance and ultimate Reality of creation and its Creator. And in *Surah Al-Ahzab*: "O, you who believe; Remember Allah often and glorify Him morning and evening" (33:41). And in *Surah Jumua*: "And when the prayer is finished, then disperse through the land, and seek of the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often and without stint, that you may prosper" (62:10). In other words, remember Him all the time, even while you are engaged in your work, or at home or outside.

There are many sayings of the Holy Prophet which speak of the superiority of remembrance of God: Abu Darda reported God's Messenger as saying, "Would you like me to tell you the best and purest of your deeds in the estimation of your Lord, those which raise you degrees highest, those which are better for you than spending gold and silver? On receiving a reply in the affirmative, he said, It is remembrance of God." (3) Abu Hurairah and Abu Saeed reported God's Messenger as saying: "People will not sit remembering God without the angels surrounding them, mercy covering them, peace descending on them, and God mentioning them among those who are with Him." (4) Abu Saeed said that God's Messenger was asked who would be the most excellent and most exalted in degree in God's estimation on the Day of

3. *Mishkat*, vol, 1. p. 479.

4. *Mishkat*, vol, 1. p. 476.

Resurrection, and he replied, "The man and woman who remember God often." (5)

Muadh ben Jabal said, "A man does nothing more calculated to rescue him from God's punishment than remembering God." Abdullah bin Umar said that the Prophet used to say, "Everything has a polish, and polish of the heart is remembrance of God. Nothing is more certain to rescue from God's punishment than remembrance of God. (17) And Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, "When you come upon the pastures of Paradise, feed on them." On being asked what the pastures of Paradise were, he replied that they were circles where God is remembered." He also reported God's Messenger as saying, "If any one prays the dawn prayer in congregation, then sits remembering God till the sun rises, then prays two *rakat*, he will have a reward equal to that of a pilgrimage (*hajj*) and a visit to Makkah (*umra*). (6) And Ka'ab bin Ujra reported God's Messenger as saying, "There are words the utterance of which after every prescribed prayer will never cause disappointment: 'Glory be to God' thirty three times, 'Praise be to God' thirty three times, and 'God is most great' thirty four times." (7)

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "One engaged in *dhikr* of God among the heedless is like a living tree in the midst of dry trees." He also said, "One busy in *dhikr* in the midst of the heedless is like a warrior in the way of God in the midst of those soldiers who fled away." The Holy Prophet said, "If any one wishes to enter the garden of Paradise, let him remember God often." He was asked which action was best. He replied, "Your meeting with death in the condition that your tongue

5. *Mishkat*, vol.1.p.481-82.

6. *Mishkat*, vol,1.p.197.

7. *Mishkat*, vol,1.p.196.

is saturated with *dhikr* of God. Saturate your tongue with *dhikr* of God morning and evening, and you will have no sin left morning and evening. And God's *dhikr* morning and evening is better than an attack with a sword in the way of God and giving wealth in charity. "The Holy Prophet said, "On the day when there will be no shade except the shade of God, God will give protection under His shade to seven persons, and one of those will be he who remembers God sincerely and sheds tears for fear of Him." (8)

The Prophet is reported to have said, "God says, "If a man refrains from invoking Me because of his engagement in My remembrance, I give him better than those who invoke Me." " The Prophet also said, "God says, 'I remain with a servant till he remembers Me and moves his lips for Me. There is no action of man except *dhikr* of God which can give him salvation.'" (8) Abdullah bin Busr told of a man saying, "Messenger of God, the Commandments of Islam are too many for me, so tell me something to which I may cling." The Prophet replied, "Your tongue will continue to be supple by *dhikr* of God." Ibn Abbas reported God's Messenger as saying, "The devil is crouching at the heart of the son of Adam. When he remembers God he withdraws, but when he is neglectful he makes evil suggestions." (9)

And there are many *hadiths* which show what evil lies in not remembering God. Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "If anyone sits in a place where he does not remember God, deprivation will descend on him from God; and if anyone lies down in a place where he does not remember God, vengeance will descend on him from God." He also reported God's Messenger as saying, "People who arise from an assembly in which they did not remember God

8. Quoted by Imam Gazzali, '*Ihya-Ulum-id-Din*, pp.286-87.

9. *Mishkat*, vol.1.p.481.

will be just as if they had got up from the corpse of an ass, and it will be a cause of grief to them." (9)

Undoubtedly remembrance of God is very dear to Him and this act of the believer raises him high in the Eyes of God. Both forms of *dhikr* mentioned above seem to be complementary in strengthening the believer's understanding of the Divine person as well as in furthering his relationship with Him. Initially this *dhikr* is unilateral and is confined to the person of the believer, but as he engages himself more and more in *dhikr Allah* his relation with the Divine Being becomes closer and closer until the believer passes on to the higher stage where the state of *dhikr* no longer remains unilateral but becomes mutual. This is because, by definition, *dhikr* implies two persons; therefore, if pursued to its logical end in a proper and effective manner, *dhikr* as memoration' can not remain a unilateral and exclusive act on the part of the believer for long. In reality, it implies a dialogue (*munajat*) between the believer and his Creator. There is also a *dhikr* (a remembrance) on the part of the Divine Being, communicating Himself in this remembrance to the believer, who begins to understand the nature of this experience and actively to participate in this creative dialogue. It is reflected in the following verse of *Surah Al-Baqarah*: "When you remember Me, I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and be not Ungrateful" (2:152). (10)

This verse truly explains the nature of remembrance of God. "It represents both a Solemn ritual and a spiritual state of mind or heart, in which the devotee seeks to realise the Presence of God. Thus there is *dhikr* of the mind and *dhikr* of the heart.

10. This subject will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter under, 'Communion with God'.

For beginners, the one may lead to the other, but in many cases the two may be simultaneous. In Sufi literature, there is a subtle distinction between the *dhikr* that is open and the *dhikr* that is secret, corresponding to the two doors of the heart, the fleshly and the spiritual." (11) The spiritual relationship between the Divine Being and man referred to in the above verse of the *Qur'an* is well confirmed by the following *hadith* of the Holy Prophet: "I am present when My servant thinks of Me, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me inwardly I shall remember him inwardly, and if he remembers Me among people I shall remember him among people who are better than they." (12)

This spiritual state of the mind or the heart, however, is experienced by believers in proportion to the degree of their spiritual progress. The beginner may not feel anything at all but as he has more practice he may feel some excitement or spiritual ecstasy occasionally, until he feels the Divine Presence and at later stages even the Divine Company. It needs great concentration of body and mind by the believer, who must submit himself completely to the Divine Being. In the state of *dhikr*, he must have no thoughts or recollections but of the Divine Company. His mind and heart must be completely free of persons or beings other than the Divine Being. Then and only then is there possibility of the Divine Vision. In the presence of persons other than God (*min dun Allah*), experience of Divine Manifestations is unthinkable. It is absolutely necessary that the believer himself must be fully prepared and equipped mentally for that kind of experience. A tradition tells us that "*Ahsan* is to worship God as though you are seeing Him, and while you see Him not yet truly He sees you." (13)

11. *Holy Qur'an*, A. Yusuf Ali, p.61.

12. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.476.

13. *Forty Hadith*, p.30 (transmitted by *Muslim*).

"But if the faithful's Divine Lord keeps him company when the faithful remembers Him inwardly, he must, if he is endowed with inner vision, see Him who is thus present. This is called contemplation (*Mushahadat*) and visualisation (*ruya*). Of course, one who is without this sense of vision does not see Him. But this, says Ibn Arabi with gravity, is the criterion by which each aspirant (*musalli*) can recognise his degree of spiritual progress. Either he sees his Lord who shows Himself to him (*tajalli*) in the subtle organ that is his heart or else he does not yet see Him in this way; then let him worship Him through faith as though He saw him." (14)

These sayings of the Holy Prophet truly explain the importance and significance of *dhikr Allah* in the life of a believer. It is the most effective and, perhaps, the only means to open dialogue with the Divine Being and enable the believer actively to participate in conversation with God. In view of its great importance, all the Messengers of God were Commanded to engage themselves in remembrance of God most of the time. Prophet Musa (Moses) and his brother Harun (Aaron) are advised not to slacken in remembrance of God: "Go you and your brother, with My Signs, and slacken not, either of you, in my remembrance" (20:42). And again, in the same *Surah* both of them are Commanded: "I have chosen you; listen, then, to the revelation. Surely, I am God, there is no deity but I. So obey Me (only), and establish prayer for My remembrance" (20:14). And Prophet Musa requested God to make his brother Harun (Aaron) his assistant so that: "We may celebrate Your praises without end, and remember You without end" (20:33-34). Prophet Zakariya (Zachariah) prayed for the grant of a son; his request was granted and he was told: "And remember your Lord

14. Henry Corbin, op, p.262.

again and again, and celebrate His praises in the evening and in the morning" (3:41).

Prophet Muhammad is Commanded: "And do remember your Lord morning and evening, deep in your heart with humility and in reverence, and also in a low voice with your tongue; do not be of those who are heedless" (7:205).

And he is again told: "And remember your Lord when you forget." (18:24) Prophet Muhammad often engaged himself in remembrance of God: "We have indeed in the Messenger of God a beautiful pattern of conduct for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day. And he engages much in *dhikr Allah*" (33:21).

All believers are commanded to engage in *dhikr Allah* after prayer: "When you have finished your prayer, you should remember God, standing, sitting down, or lying down on your sides" (4:103). In *Surah al-Ahzab*: "O you believe; remember God with much remembrance and celebrate His praises morning and evening" (33:41-42). They are told to engage often in His remembrance after they have finished congregational prayer: "And when the prayer is finished, then you may disperse through the land and seek of the Bounty of God, and remember God often without end, that you may prosper" (62:10). Again in *surah al-Baqarah*, believers are told to engage in *dhikr Allah* during the pilgrimage: "Then when you return from Arafat, stay at *Mash'ar-al-Haram* (*Muzdalifah*) and remember God. And remember Him just as He has enjoined you.....and when you have performed your pilgrimage rites, remember God as you had been remembering your own forefathers, or even with greater zeal" (2:198-200). And during fighting: "O Believers, when you encounter a host in combat, be steadfast and remember Allah very much, it is expected that you will succeed." (8:45) The action of believers is praised in *Surah al-Nur*: "Who neither

trade nor business can divert from remembrance of God , nor from regular prayer " (24:37).

It is absolutely clear from these verse of the *Qur'an* and traditions of the Holy Prophet that *dhikr Allah* is a great thing. God has told His servants to remember Him and He, in turn, remembers them. This mutual remembrance provides an opportunity to believers to enter into a creative and purposeful dialogue with God, to come closer to Him and present their requests directly to Him. This can prove to be an effective means for the fulfilment of their many desires. God Himself says that He is very near and that He responds to the invocation of those who invoke Him. So there is nothing better than *dhikr Allah*. A famous sage, Sabet Bononi, said, "I know when my Lord remembers me". People asked him how he knew that his Lord remembered him, He said, "He remembers me when I remember Him" (2:152). Ibn Abbas said, "*dhikr Allah* is the greatest thing because of two reasons. Firstly because God's remembrance of you is better than your remembrance of Him, and secondly, because God's remembrance is better than all other Divine services." (25) Ibn Abbas also said, "Remember God day and night, on land and water, in journey and habitation, in solvency and want, in health and disease, openly and secretly." In other words, remember Him always, under all circumstances." (15)

Another sage, Fuzail, said, "We have been informed that if a man engages in *dhikr Allah* for one hour after the morning prayer and one hour after the *asr* prayer, it wipes out all his sins." Another one has said, "God says that if I see My *dhikr* prevailing in the mind of a person, I take the administration

15. *The Book of worship*, Book 1 Imam Gazzali's *Ihya-ulum-id-din*, English translation by Fazlul Karim, pp. 285- 86.

of his affairs and I become his companion, advisor and friend. Hasan Basari said, *dhikr* is of two kinds. One is in your mind and the other, which is better than this , is remembrance of God at the time of doing an evil act." And one wise man has said that every soul will come out of the world thirsty except one who remembers God. Muadh-bin-Jabal said, "The inhabitants of Paradise will not grieve for anything but the time which passed without remembrance of God." (16)

Dhikr Allah is undoubtedly a great thing. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "If a party of men are engaged in *dhikr Allah*, the angels surround them, mercy encompasses them and God remembers them before angels very close to Him." "And if a party of men engage in remembrance of God for His Pleasure, a proclaimer proclaims from heaven: Your sins have been forgiven and you have been given virtues instead of your sins." (26) Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "God has angels who go about on the roads seeking those who remember Him, and when they find people doing so they call to one another, 'Come to what you are looking for', and they surround them with their wings up to the lowest heaven." The Prophet said that their Lord then asks them, although He is the best informed about them, "What are My servants saying?" They reply, "They are extolling, magnifying, praising and glorifying you." He asks them whether they have seen Him, and when they reply, 'No indeed, they have not seen you;' He asks them how would they act if they had seen Him, to which they reply, "If they had seen you they would have engaged more earnestly in worshipping and glorifying you, and would have extolled you much more." (17)

16. *The Book of Worship*, Book.1. pp. 287-88.

17. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p. 477.

Thirdly, *dhikr Allah* is used for the establishment of daily prayers. Very often the *Qur'an* uses *dhikr* to mean prayer. It commands the believers to engage in *dhikr Allah* through the establishment of prayer, which is a form of *dhikr*. In the following verse of *Surah al-Baqarah*, believers are told to remember God and seek help through patience and prayer to acquire this state of mind: (18) "Then do ye remember Me, I will remember you, ...O ye who believe; seek help with patience and prayer." (2:152-153). After a change of *qibla*, the *Ummat-i-Muslimah* was given a position of distinction. The Jews were dismissed from the post of *imamat* (vicegerency on the earth) and this *umamat* was handed over the responsibility of '*Shahadat-alan-Nas*' til the Day of Judgement. On this occasion they are reminded of their heavy responsibility and are advised to seek help from patience and prayer for this purpose and are, at the same time, warned never to be forgetful of God's remembrance. If they remember God, and are grateful to Him, He will remember them and bestow His Favours upon them.

It is a significant and very important contract between God and the *ummat-i-Muslimah*. And *dhikr* here refers to all the duties and responsibilities entrusted to this *ummat* as vicegerents on the earth. If they remember and fulfil what is entrusted to them, God promises to remember them and bestow all the favours, successes, and honours of this world and the Hereafter upon them. Then at the end, they are advised to seek assistance in this difficult task with patient perseverance and prayer. The latter would infuse that spirit and energy into believers which would take them successfully over all obstacles they might come across in their struggle for the establishment of Truth and Justice in the world.

18. *The Book of Worship*, Book.1.pp.287-288.

Then again, in the same *Surah*, believers are advised to establish *dhikr Allah* in the times of war: "If you fear (an enemy), pray on foot, or riding, (as may be most convenient), but when you are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you" (2:239). In times of war, believers are told to remember God (establish prayer) in any position they find most convenient, sitting, standing, on foot, or riding, but in peace-time, they must pray in the proper manner, observing all its conditions and prerequisites. Here *dhikr* means prayer and it is often used in this sense in the *Holy Qur'an*. As the soul of prayer is *dhikr Allah*, it is sometimes referred to by its real nature, so that a believer, while engaged in the observance of the form, may not forget this real nature and be confined to form.

That *dhikr Allah* is the real soul and purpose of prayer is clear from the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "Establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds, and *dhikr Allah* is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt" (29:45). As prayer is a form of *dhikr Allah*, a believer experiences the spiritual enlightenment of his soul in it. He feels the Presence of God in prayer and this helps him to purify his body and soul of all impurity and evil. Because of the tremendous influence and purifying effect of prayer, the *Holy Qur'an* calls *dhikr Allah* the greatest thing in life. It is through prayer and *dhikr Allah* that a man achieves communion with his Lord, the highest spiritual experience any human being can ever dream of. The Prophet Musa (Moses) was Commanded to establish prayer in order to keep up *dhikr Allah* in these words: "So serve thou Me (only), and establish regular prayer for My Remembrance" (20:14).

This clearly reveals the nature of *dhikr* and its

great function in breaking the barriers between the Creator and His creation. And again, in the same *Surah*, he and his brother Harun (Aaron) are Commanded to maintain their link with God through *dhikr* and never slacken in it: "Go thou and thy brother, with My signs, and slacken not either of you, in My *dhikr*" (20:42). And the Holy Messenger Muhammad is asked to establish His *dhikr* through prayer in these words: "And celebrate the Name of thy Lord morning and evening. And part of the night, prostrate thyself to Him, and Glorify Him a long night through" (76:14). If man joins in concert with the whole of creation in glorifying God, the weary hours of a long night are no longer weary, but become full of meaning, for the mysteries of His Grandeur gradually begin to unveil themselves to the thirsty and the anxious lover. God Praises such people, who are always, and in every situation, engaged, in His Remembrance: "Men who celebrate the Praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides" (3:191). Men of knowledge and wisdom always try their best to understand the great mysteries of the universe. They contemplate the wonders of the Creator and celebrate His Praises in recognition of His Mastery and Lordship over all.

Ultimate success and prosperity is guaranteed to such people: "But those will prosper who purify themselves and glorify the Name of their Guardian-Lord, and (lift their hearts) in prayer" (87:14-15). Undoubtedly, purification and prosperity are the fruit for those who celebrate God's praises. Hearts are completely purified through communion with God when they are engaged in the act of celebrating His praises in prayer. And no success or prosperity is greater than purity of heart for believers. It is because they are fully conscious of the Glory of God and their humility and lowness: "The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble there at, then their skins and their hearts do soften to the

celebration of Allah's praises" (39:23).

So in spiritual experience, the first stimulation from God's remembrance is physical and external. The first impact gives a shock to the individual, who trembles with fear and his hair stands on end with excitement. But then it penetrates his outer nature and goes into his heart. His whole nature is "softened" to receive the beneficent Message, which transforms him through and through. In the last stage, he is full of His praises and is completely satisfied and happy. This is the highest success for a human being to be in the Presence of his Lord. (19)

As the prize is very high and noble, believers are advised not to lose it but make every effort to keep it through the remembrance of God: "O you who believe; let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah; if they act thus, the loss is their own" (63:9). "Riches and human resources of all kinds are but fleeting sources of enjoyment. They should not turn away the good man from his devotion to Allah. Remembrance of Allah includes every act of service and goodness, every kind thought and kind deed, for this is the service and sacrifice which Allah requires of us. If we fail in this, the loss is our own, not any one else's: for it stunts our own spiritual growth". (20)

Because of the great utility and practical benefit of prayer and *dhikr Allah*, believers are Commanded to keep it up in these words: "O ye who believe; when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic). That is the best

19. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 1244.

20. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p. 1552.

for you if ye but knew" (62:9-10). The believers are told to stop their worldly business and trading and come to reap the harvest of spiritual good from listening to the call to prayer. When the time for the Friday prayer comes, the Muslims should close their business dealings and join in the remembrance of Allah. Their immediate and temporal worldly gains may prove to be their ultimate and spiritual loss. But when the congregational prayer is finished, they are free to go and seek their livelihood and, at the same time, also celebrate the praises of their Lord. (62:10)

The believers may seek their livelihood after prayer but their real prosperity is in Remembrance of God. Prosperity is not always measured in terms of worldly gain or wealth. The higher prosperity and peace of mind is in the health of the spirit.

In view of the immense benefit of *dhikr Allah*, believers are told to remember Allah much more when they are face to face with their enemies on the battlefield for this will strengthen their faith in God and defeat the designs of their enemies (8:45). In the *Holy Qur'an*, believers are told that their real prosperity lies in remembering God. If they engage in this much and often, they will reap their harvest in full measure. And there is no doubt that true servants of God turn to Him, day and night, and seek no worldly gain, but His Grace, His Presence and His Nearness. Even if they are poor in worldly goods, they gain more in inward and spiritual satisfaction.

If, on the other hand, they refrain from *dhikr Allah*, they will not only be deprived of the highest prize of spiritual bliss but will also be thrown into the degradation of misery and darkness: "Nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds" (18:28). Those who

stray from God's Path and His Remembrance and follow their own lusts are deprived of His Grace. They fall deeper into evil ways and get lost in darkness: "But whosoever turns away from My Remembrance, verily for him is a life narrowed down and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgement" (20:124).

"A life narrowed down" has many implications. It is a life from which all the beneficent influences of God's wide world are excluded. It is a life for self, not all. In looking exclusively to the "good things" of this life, it misses the True Reality. "He misused his physical gift of sight and made himself blind for the other world,..... and for God's Signs. He, therefore, will not see God's Favours, and will be excluded from His Grace." (21) Punishment of such people, who forget Remembrance of God, is described in these words: "And We shall present Hell that Day for unbelievers...who's eyes had been under a veil from Remembrance of Me and who had been unable even to hear" (18:100-101). Those who had deliberately forgotten His Remembrance in this life would see the terrible Reality without any doubt or mistake on the Day of Judgement when there would be no escape for them from the punishment of the Fire: "But if any turn away from the Remembrance of his Lord, He will cause him to undergo a severe Penalty" (72:17). For a true lover, the presence of his Beloved is the highest ambition and pleasure of his life and deprivation from Him is the maximum penalty for him. To remember God is to realise His Presence, acknowledge His Goodness, and accept His Guidance. If we fail to do so, by deliberately turning away, He will withdraw His Grace and Presence, and that will be a severe penalty indeed.

There are, as pointed out before, many traditions of the Holy Prophet which stress the grave consequences of not remembering God, because "He who remembers his Lord and he who does not are like the living and the dead". Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "If people sit in a assembly in which they do not remember God or invoke a blessing on their Prophet, vengeance will descend upon them. If God wills He will punish them and if He wills He will forgive them." And Ibn Umar reported God's Messenger as saying, "Do not speak much without mentioning God, for much talk without Remembrance of God produces hardness of heart, and the one who is farthest from God is he who has a hard heart". (22) Prophet David said, "O my Lord, when you see me joining the heedless after leaving the assembly engaged in *dhikr Allah*, break my feet under their feet, as a gift cast upon them." (23)

In short, Remembrance in all these forms is the most effective and convenient means available to man to acquire the Grace and Presence of God and to have a glimpse of the spiritual experience of His Grandeur and Glory and, through it, to attain real and lasting peace, prosperity and happiness of the mind and heart.

22. *Mishkat*, vol. 1., pp. 476-80.

23. *The Book of Worship*, Book. 1. p. 288.

FEAR OF GOD

It is absolutely necessary for fear of God to be constantly kept in the heart of believers. "A Muslim can never practise Islam unless he believes that God is watching him all the time at every place, that God is aware of his every action, that God sees him even in darkness and that God is with him even when he is alone. It is possible to hide oneself from the whole world but it is impossible to be concealed from God. A man can escape from the punishment of the whole world but it is impossible to escape from the punishment of God. It is this belief which restrains man from violating the injunctions of God. It is on the strength of this belief that he is compelled to observe those limits of *halal* (the permissible) and *haram* (the forbidden) which God has imposed in the affairs of life. If this belief is weakened, a Muslim can never lead the life of a Muslim in its true sense. For this reason, God has made daily prayer compulsory (five times every day) so that it keeps on strengthening this belief in the hearts of the faithful". (1)

"Fear of God is the result of real faith and belief. One who is given such a faith fears God during and after prayer. He fears Him all the time, because God knows the condition of his mind and his sins and faults. Fear grows in the mind of one who is conscious of it and it is not confined only to prayer". (2) In earlier Scriptures, it is narrated that God said, "If you have no fear of God in your heart, what is the value of your *dhikr*? The Holy Prophet said, "When you pray, pray as if you are saying farewell". He also said, "Fear God, He will teach you. Fear God and be conscious of the fact that you have to meet Him. Ayesha said that the

1. Abul Ala Maududi, *Fundamentals of Islam*, pp. 105-106.

2. *The Book of Worship*, Book. 1. pp. 167-168.

Holy Prophet used to talk with us and we talked to Him. When the time for prayer came, he did not as if we were to recognise us and we also did not recognise him, as we remained busy in celebrating the Glory of God. (3)

When the time of prayer came, the heart of Ali trembled and his colour changed. He was asked, "O Commander of the faithful, what has happened to you?" He said, "It is the time of the trust of God which was entrusted to the heavens, earth and mountains but they were afraid and refused to bear it, but I am bearing it when it has come to me". When Zain al-Abidin performed ablution, his colour changed and turned pale. His family members asked him, what troubled you at the time of ablution?" He replied, "Don't you see before whom I am going to stand?" Prophet David used to say in his prayer. "O my Lord, who lives in your House and from whom do you accept prayer?. God revealed to him, "The man who lives in My House and from whom I accept prayer is one who humbles himself before My Glory, passes his life in My Remembrance, controls his passion for My sake, entertains a stranger and shows kindness to the aggrieved. His light will spark like the rays of the sun in the sky. I respond to him if he calls Me. If he invokes Me, I accept it.

The prayer keeps fear of God fresh in the mind of an individual. It makes him more God-fearing and pious. It keeps him right on the path of righteousness and guards him against evil. Regularity in prayer generates the spirit of obedience to the Command of Allah: "Observe strictly the prayer and take particular care to offer your prayer in the most excellent way, and stand before Allah like devoted servants" (2:238). God has impressed here the importance of prayer as a finishing touch because it alone can

3. *The Book of Worship*, Book.1.pp.167-168.

produce fear of God and feelings of virtue and piety and create the attitude of obedience to the Divine Law and keep one on the Right Path. None can remain firm in one's obedience to the Law of God without regular prayer, for one is liable to swerve into one kind of disobedience or the other. (4)

Constant communion with God through prayer keeps the fear of God always present in the mind of a believer. The very realisation that he has to meet the Divine Being five times daily keeps him obedient and fearful of Him throughout the day. He never loses touch with his Creator at any time of the day or night. This permanent communication through prayer is the strongest link between man and his Lord. This link keeps fear of God ever alive in the mind of a believer. Such men are true servants of God for they always keep up prayer: "Men whom neither merchandise nor bargaining diverts from remembrance of Allah and the establishment of prayer.....They fear a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be transformed" (24:37).

These people establish regular prayer in obedience to the Command of God for they fear the chastisement of the Day of Judgement. They always live a good life and try their best to keep away from the sins of this world for they feel shame to appear before their Lord in a state of sinfulness. As they expect to meet Him daily in prayer, they try their best to see Him while they are obedient and righteous. Thus fear of God is a very strong and effective means of keeping men righteous and virtuous. And daily prayer helps in keeping fear of God ever strong and real in the minds of men. (5)

4. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol.1.p.166.

5. For more details on this subject see also under 'Taqwa' in this section.

Love of God

The righteous, who fear God and keep up prayer, have real love and reverence for their Creator. Their love and reverence for Him and the knowledge of His Authority and Power on the Day of Judgement, make them fear Him. In fact, feelings of love and fear are always mingled in a true believer. He loves God and at the same time he fears Him. His love makes him lead a life of goodness, piety and righteousness, while his fear of God makes him refrain from a life of evil.

Love demands complete and total obedience to the Command of the Beloved and fear demands unqualified abstention from what He dislikes or prohibits. This blending of love and fear helps to produce men of very high character who mould the destinies of nations and change the course of history. Such men were produced by the teachings of Islam in the first few *Hijrah* centuries. They loved God and feared Him and established regular prayer in obedience to His Command. One of these men was the Apostle Ibrahim who said: "Truly, my prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of worldsAnd I am the first of those who submit to His Will" (6:163). "When, in fact, God is the Lord of everything in the universe, how can any other be my Lord? When I see that the whole of the universe submits to his Law and I, too, being a part of the universe, have to submit to Him in my physical life, how then can it be rational that I should seek another Lord for the guidance that part of my life for the conduct of which I have been given common sense and option". (6)

Islam conveys the idea of total submission to God as a token of love for Him. And the outward expression

of this obedience and love is prayer. It shows how much a man loves and obeys his Creator, how much he reveres Him and how much sacrifice he is prepared to make for Him. All these feelings of a true believer may be expressed through his regularity of prayer. "There are different motives, love of one's self, of one's wife and children, of one's friends and relatives, of one's country or nation, which prompt a man to action, and there is no doubt that the grander, the purer, and the more selfless the object, the nobler is the deed done, but above even the noblest object that a man can set for himself stands the love of the Divine Being. The deed done may be for the welfare of one's self, or of those dearest to one or to one's country or nation, but the mainspring of that action must be love of the Divine Being, for it is only then that perfect disinterestedness combined with absolute justice to all creatures can be achieved. It is the highest goal of human life and every Muslim is taught to set that goal before himself. He is taught to pray in the words of this verse when he begins his daily prayers." (7)

Those who establish regular prayer are so devoted to their Lord and love Him so much that no sacrifice is too great for them. "Surely man is created impatient.....fretful when good befalls him, when evil afflicts him, and niggardly.....except those who are devoted to prayer, who remain steadfast to their prayer" (70:19-20). This is another "aspect of what is described elsewhere as the Faithful and the Righteous. It means a complete surrender of one's being to God. This means an earnest approach to and realisation of God's Presence." (7)

No idleness, comfort, engagement or interest can ever disturb or interfere with the regularity of

their prayer. When the time for the prayer comes, they leave everything and come before their Lord in prayer, Uqbah bin Amir says that the words 'who remain steadfast in their prayer' means 'who offer their prayer with complete peace of mind and *khusu* and do not hasten to finish it quickly. They also do not think of other things in prayer. (8) When the time of prayer comes, a true believer, wherever and in whatever condition he may be, whether walking in a street, boarding a plane or a ship, or engaged in business or pleasure, turns to the *ka'ba* and commences his prayer. This devotion to Almighty God in prayer shows the intensity of his love and reverence for his Creator.

Piety (*Taqwa*)

Ibadah is the main source of *taqwa*. *Taqwa* means godliness, devoutness and piety, and all these qualities spring from prayer, which is an important form of *ibadah*. A man who submits himself completely to the Will of God and lets all his affairs be governed by His Law, becomes His devout and obedient servant. "Adoration is the act of the highest and humblest reverence and worship. When you get into that relationship with God, Who is your Creator and Guardian, your faith produces works of righteousness. It is a chance given to you: will you exercise your free will and take it? If you do, your whole nature will be transformed." (8)

All the Messengers commanded their followers to worship and obey God in order to develop *taqwa*, so that they might be able to lead righteous lives and avoid evil. The word *taqwa* comes from *ittiqa* (تقوا), which is used in the *Holy Qur'an* to express various meanings: (a) To guard one's self against danger: "Then how shall you, if you deny

8. *Holy Qur'an*, A. Yusuf Ali, p.21.

(Allah), guard yourself against a Day that will make children hoary-headed" (73:17). (b) To fear some expected tumult or *fitna*: "And fear tumult or oppression which affect not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong" (8:25). (c) To tremble with fear before God Who is merciful to His grateful and faithful servants, Who dislikes disobedience and sin and Who knows the open and the hidden: "And those who feared their Lord will be led to the garden in crowds" (39:73). It is very comprehensive word and covers all the above mentioned meanings, the fear of the evil consequences of sin and the Anger of God.

In the light of this explanation, a *muttaqi* is one whose heart is full of the Grandeur and Glory of God and the fear of His anger and who is fully conscious of the evil consequences of sin, though in the word *taqwa*, the condition of the heart in relation to physical activity, and abstention in relation to action is more dominant and, as such, it may be said that here the negative aspect overshadows the positive one. But because it is a sign of the soundness of the heart if the heart is healthy and sound, everything is healthy..... it becomes the source of both knowledge and action. In short, *taqwa* is a condition of the heart which is full of fear, dread and reverence for Almighty God and, in consequence, it leads to external acts of godliness, devoutness, righteousness and piety. Thus both fear and righteousness are essential ingredients of *taqwa*.

Prayer makes people *muttaqi* for it reminds them day and night of the Glory of God and their accountability for their actions. Besides, constant contact with God through the institution of prayer creates *taqwa* of God in the hearts of people, which makes them righteous and virtuous in their actions: "It is no virtue if you enter your houses from the back, it is virtue if you fear Allah" (2:189). And

in the same *Surah al-Baqarah*: "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or WestBut it is righteousness to believe in Allah.. ...And to be steadfast in prayer" (2:177).

Both these verses show the futility of extreme formalism in religion and point out that there is no real virtue in the mere act of entering your houses from the back or turning your faces to the West or to the East in prayer. Instead, a beautiful description of the righteous and God-fearing man is given. He loves God and His creatures more than anything else.

The same thing is mentioned in the following verse: "It is neither their flesh nor their blood that reaches God, it is your piety (*taqwa*) that reaches Him" (22:37). This makes it clear that a sacrifice is acceptable to God only if it is accompanied by sincerity and piety. Though sacrifice is a formal rite, its acceptance is conditional on piety and sincerity. This shows that the real thing which carries weight in the eyes of God is whole-hearted love for Him and prayer is a very effective means of developing and acquiring love for the Divine. This close relationship of love gradually makes man pious and virtuous. Surely, prayer helps to remind people of the Authority of God and thereby makes them virtuous. Every Messenger of God, as pointed out before, commanded his people to worship God and establish prayer so that they might attain righteousness, for the latter is an essential consequence of the former. Prophet Noah asked his people: "O my people; Worship (and obey) Allah; you have no other deity but Him. Will you not fear (Him)?" (23:23) And Prophet Saleh told his people: "Worship (and obey) Allah; you have no other deity but Him. Will you not fear (Him) (23:32).

All Prophets form one Brotherhood of Truth: their

Message is one, and their religion and teaching are one, they serve (obey) the One True God and they owe their duty to Him and Him Alone. They all taught their people to obey God and be pious and righteous: "And verily this Prophethood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Sustainer, therefore fear Me (and be righteous)" (23:52). Prophet Nuhammad is Commanded: "Turn your back in repentance to Him and fear Him. Establish regular prayer, and be not among those who join partners with God" (30:31). Prophet Muhammad is told to call his people to obey God: "Say O Muhammad: "God's Guidance is the (only) guidance, and we have been directed to submit ourselves to the Lord of the worlds, to establish prayer and to fear God. For it is to Him that we shall be gathered together" (6:71-72).

Once the Holy Prophet Muhammad defined *taqwa* in these words: "A man, who is passing through a thick forest of thorny bushes, tries to protect himself from the thorns all around him. He endeavours to keep off the thorny bushes from him. Sometimes, he moves to this side and sometimes to the other to guard himself from the probable injury that he might otherwise suffer from the thorns. This action and carefulness on the part of this man in the thorny forest to protect himself from the thorny bushes and trees is *taqwa*. This is how a *muttaqi* should lead his life in this world, which is full of the thorns of evil and corruption. Prayer is prescribed to develop protection, a kind of immunization, in the form of *taqwa* in a believer to guard him from the onslaught of evil from within and without. And the best of men in the eyes of God is the one who has His *taqwa* in his heart: "O Mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the eyes of God is (he who is) the most

righteous of you" (49:13).

This is addressed to all mankind and not only to the Muslim brotherhood, though it is understood that in a perfect world the two would be synonymous. As it is, mankind is descended from one pair of parents. Their tribes, races and nations are convenient labels by which we may know certain differing characteristics. Before God they are all one, and he gets most honour who is most righteous. (9) The *Qur'an* here points to the great error that has always been responsible for corruption and inequity in society in all ages, i.e., prejudice based on difference of race, colour, language or nationality. This discrimination is not based on any rational or moral principle but on the accident of birth. In the above verse of the *Holy Qur'an*, three important principles are explained.

First, that you all are born of one pair or parents, one man and one woman, and all the races and nations that are found in the different parts of the world are, in reality, offspring of the same original pair. There is, therefore, no logical, rational or moral basis for gradation between you. You have One God Who created you from one pair of parents and from the same substance.

Second, that in spite of one origin, your distribution in tribes and nations is natural. Obviously, all mankind cannot be, in a narrow sense, one family or one nation. With increase in population, it was inevitable, that many families should come into existence and, from those families, tribes and nations. Likewise, with movement of people to different regions and parts of the world, differences in their language, colour, features and culture was bound to occur. This would also create vast geogr-

9. *Holy Qur'an*, p.1407.

aphical divisions and distances separating different habitations. But this natural difference and division between various nations does not warrant gradation between man and man or between one nation and another, that one nation should feel superiority over another one, or that people of one colour should regard people of another colour as inferior to them, or that people should differentiate in matters of human rights between different nations, etc. The reason God has created mankind in tribes and nations is because this is the natural way for their mutual introduction, acquaintance and co-operation. In this way, people of one family, one tribe and one nation can work together and form one culture and one community and cooperate with one another in social matters. It was but sheer ignorance that what was only a means of recognition and acquaintance with one another was made a means of pride or hatred among people.

Third, that if there is any basis of distinction or superiority between man and man then it is by moral excellence, virtue or piety. All men are equal as far as birth is concerned because their Creator is One, the substance and method of their creation is one and the same and their ancestry goes up to one pair of parents. Besides, the birth of any man in one nation, family or country is merely accidental, and his own will, choice or effort has no part in it. Therefore, there is no rational or logical reason for giving preference to one over the other. The real thing which can make one excel the other is this: that he fears God more than others, avoids evil and treads the way of goodness and piety. Such a man, whatever nation, tribe or country he belongs to is an asset to any society for his personal excellence. And the one showing opposite characteristics is a man of low grade, whether black, white, brown, from the East or from the West.

The Holy Prophet explained the same principle in his address on the occasion of the victory at Makkah: "Thanks to our Lord Who has removed from you the evil of ignorance and its pride. O People; all mankind is divided only into two parts. The one righteous and *muttaqi*, who is honoured in the eyes of God, and the other wicked, shameless and damned, who is despised and contemptible in the eyes of God. Otherwise all men are offspring of Adam and God Created Adam from dust." On the occasion of his Last Pilgrimage, the Prophet said, "O People; Beware, you all have One God. No Arab has preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor a white over a black, nor a black over a white except from *taqwa* (piety). The most honoured among you in the eyes of God is the one who is most pious.

There are many traditions of the Holy prophet which stress this point, what that really gives distinction to a person is his *taqwa*. The Holy Prophet said, "you are all descendants of Adam and he was created from dust. O People, leave boasting of ancestry, otherwise they will be more despised than an ordinary insect in the eyes of God. On another occasion, the Prophet said, "On the Day of Judgement, God will not ask you of your ancestry. The most honoured among you in the eyes of God is the one who is most pious." And he also said, "God does not see your faces and your wealth, what He sees is your hearts and your deeds." (10) In short in Islam, there is no distinction of colour, creed, or nationality; all men are equal in the eyes of God. They are all one before Him and only those are honoured who are most righteous and pious (*muttaqi*). Even other forms of *ibadah*, such as pilgrimage and fasting, help in the growth of *taqwa* in individuals: "O ye who believe; fasting is

10. *Tafheem al Qur'an*, vol.v, pp.95-98.

prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may learn *taqwa*" (2:183). And with regard to pilgrimage, it is said: "And whatever good you do, (be sure) Allah knows. And take a provision (with you) for the journey, but the best of provisions is *taqwa*" (2:197).

The purpose of *'ibadah* in all its forms is the attainment of *taqwa*. Temporary restraint from all human instincts, as in fasting and pilgrimage, enables the attention to be directed to the nobler and higher things of life. It strengthens human resistance to temptation from the lower and evil levels of the self and lifts man up to the higher and more spiritual levels.

Piety is further strengthened through prayer, *dhikr Allah* and acts of charity which are performed seeking the Pleasure of God. All this helps in building up *taqwa* in the hearts of believers. This is why God encourages believers to help one another in acts of righteousness: "Co-operate with all in what is good and pious but do not co-operate in what is sinful and wicked" (5:3). God therefore advises believers to attain *taqwa* in these words: "Surely We enjoined the people of the Book before you, and now enjoin you also (O Muslims) to fear Allah (have *taqwa*) in all your dealings" (4:131). Then they are told to establish prayer so that they may be able to acquire *taqwa*: "To establish prayer and refrain from disobedience of Him (have *taqwa* of Him)" (6:72). And again in *Surah Rum*: "Turn you back in repentance to Him, and have *taqwa* of Him; establish regular prayer" (30:31).

The words used in this verse, "Turn back in repentance to God" and "fear His Anger" are both conditions of the heart. This condition of the heart needs for its consolidation and expression some physical form to show people that the person has

really come back with sincerity into the fold of Islam and obedience of God. Also, this state of repentance and fear of God (*taqwa*) in the heart of man is in need of continuous growth and development through some practical exercise. That is why, soon after the change in a man's mental state he is commanded to observe this physical deed, i.e., establishment of prayers, in order to consolidate the condition of repentance and fear of God in his heart. So long as an idea remains merely an idea in his heart, it cannot acquire consolidation and permanence. There is a danger of a weakening of this idea, as well as every likelihood of change in it, but when a man starts working according to an idea, it takes root in him and, as he goes on working according to it, its roots get deeper and deeper until any change or weakening in his idea becomes harder and harder.

From this point of view, there is no act more effective and successful in strengthening the state of repentance and fear of God in the heart of a man than five daily prayers, because any other act will not be as consistent and persistent. Prayer is performed in the same way at intervals every day. It contains comprehensive lessons in faith (*iman*) and submission to the Will of God (Islam) which are again and again repeated so that he may not forget them. Besides this, it is necessary that both unbelievers and believers should know who has come out of the state of rebellion into complete obedience to God. This knowledge is required for the believers so that they may become a single party and community and co-operate with one another in the cause of God. And whenever the relation of any believer with Islam seems to be weakening, some physical sign will immediately inform all the members of his state of mind. And for the unbelievers this knowledge is necessary so that this continuous practice might awaken their inner nature

and bring them back into obedience of their Lord. Thus establishment of prayer seems to be the most appropriate means to achieve these objectives.

It may here be pointed out that this Commandment to establish prayer was given in Makkah at the time when a small group of Muslims was severely persecuted and oppressed by the powerful Quraish tribe of unbelievers. No one could at that time dream of an Islamic state, but within a period of nine years, faith in God and regular practice of prayer brought strength and power to this small community of Muslims and enabled them to establish an Islamic state in Medinah. In the attainment of *taqwa*, (piety) the institution of prayer plays a very predominant role. The believers are therefore asked time and again to establish prayer in order to acquire *taqwa*. They are Commanded to worship and obey none else but God and have *taqwa* of Him in their hearts: "That you should worship Allah, have *taqwa* of Him, and obey Me" (71:3).

These were the three things which Prophet Noah presented to his people: (1) True worship of God with heart and soul, (2) fear of God (*taqwa*) and recognition that all evil must lead to self-deterioration while piety leads to prosperity, growth and ultimate success; and (3) repentance and change of life style and complete obedience of God's Messenger.

Worship of God means that a man should stop obeying man-made laws and ways in every walk of life and submit himself completely and totally to the Commandments of God. He should bring his entire life-style under the Direction and Command of God. He should worship Him and obey His Commands only. *Taqwa* means that he should refrain from those acts which invite the Anger and Wrath of God and adopt the way of life of God-fearing persons. And obedience of God's Messengers requires obedience of all

their Commands, which they give in their capacity as Messengers. Worship, obedience and *taqwa* on the part of man are reserved for God and none else. Success and prosperity is guaranteed for those who have *taqwa*. "But best is the home in the Hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will you not understand?" (6:32) And in *Surah A'raf*: "And best for the righteous is the home in the Hereafter. Will you not understand?" (7:169) And truly, people who by constant worship, obedience and *ibadah* acquire *taqwa* in their hearts deserve the final place of eternal bliss and happiness with their Lord.

Every Messenger of God invited his people to acquire *taqwa* so that they would enjoy a life of prosperity and success in both the worlds. "And to the Ad We sent their brother Hud. He said, O my people: Worship God. You have no deity other than He. Will you not fear God and refrain from wrong ways (and adopt *taqwa*)" (7:65). "Behold, their brother Salih said to them, 'Will you not refrain from evil ways (and adopt *taqwa*)? I am to you a Messenger worthy of all trust. So fear God and obey me' " (26:142-144) "Behold, their brother Lut said to them, 'Will you not refrain from wrong ways (and adopt *taqwa*)? I am to you a Messenger worthy of trust. So fear God and obey me'" (26:161-163). "Behold, Shuaib said to them, 'Will you not refrain from evil ways (and adopt *taqwa*)? I am to you a Messenger worthy of all trust. So fear God and obey me' " (26:177-179).

And Prophet Elias before them: "Behold, he said to his people, 'Will you not abstain from wrong ways (and adopt *taqwa*)? God is your Lord and Cherisher and the Lord and Cherisher of your fathers of old'" (37:124-126). Prophet Yunas (Jonah) said to his people, "Who is it that sustains you in life from the sky and from the earth...? Will you not fear God and refrain from wrong ways (and adopt *taqwa*)?" (10:31). And Prophet Noah before them all: "Behold,

their brother Noah said to them, 'Will you not abstain from evil ways (and adopt *taqwa*)? I am to you a Messenger worthy of trust. So fear God and obey me' " (26:106-108). And finally, this call was repeated by the Last Messenger of God, Muhammad, "Fulfil our Covenant with God, Who has enjoined 'this way alone is My Way leading straight, therefore you should follow this Way and should not follow other ways lest they lead you astray from His Way. This is what God has enjoined on you so that you may avoid crooked and wrong ways (and adopt *taqwa*)' " (*Qur'an*: 6:152-53).

TAZKIYA (PURIFICATION)

The word *tazkiya* means first, purification of body and mind; chastening of oneself of all evil and wickedness; in other words, complete moral purity, honesty, integrity and righteousness and second, growth and development of personality and prosperity and success. Thus the word *tazkiya* has two basic meanings: one is cleansing and purifying and the other growth and development. Both these meanings seem to be completely coherent and inseparable from each other. Anything which is free from the opposing and rival forces of evil and corruption will necessarily grow and develop according to its natural capabilities. Messengers of God purified (*tazkiya*) human souls in both senses. They cleansed the hearts, deeds and morals of people from wrong things and also strengthened these faculties through their proper growth and development. They, by cleansing the hearts, deeds and morals of people from wrong things and by encouraging their proper growth and development, strengthened these faculties so that they could face with steadfastness the opposing forces of evil corruption. This is why purification of souls requires more hard work, effort, labour and steadfastness than teaching the Book. The *Qur'an* mentions this as the object and end of the Islamic *shariah* (Law) and *Din* (Religion).

Thus the process of purification (*tazkiya*) is theoretical (*ilmi*) and practical (*amli*), external and internal, and material and spiritual. At the same time, it is individual as well as social. However, it has certain basic requisites which must be taken into consideration. First, a close watch must be kept on the minds, actions and morals of the people in order to protect them from the germs which cause (and spread) spiritual and moral diseases in society. At the same time those virtues must be encouraged which improve man internally and externally

and civilise his ways, customs and natural tendencies. Its second requisite is that people should be educated and trained in such a way that every virtue and good thing gets rooted in them and every evil and bad thing is despised by their very nature. Its third requisite is that through education and training, an atmosphere must be created which serves as a background for the self-purification of individuals. Whoever lives in this society should acquire the effects of those surroundings and whoever comes into it should get its colour. (1) Thus the purification of life means the purification of beliefs, ideas, habits, customs, culture and politics; in short, of every aspect of life. (2)

The institution of prayer is a major instrument of purification of one's self of all evil from within and without. It helps to remove evil ideas, evil designs and evil influences from one's mind by constant remembrance of God through regular attendance in congregational prayer, as explained earlier under Moral Benefits. It also assists in crushing and weakening the external evil influences of society by developing qualities of patience and endurance in the individual.

It is beautifully explained in the following verse of the *Holy Qur'an* how God sent His Messengers to various people to bring them together to worship and obey Him, to turn to His House for prayer, to teach His Book and Wisdom and purify them of all evil: "We have sent the Messenger to you from among you, who recites to you My Revelations, who purifies your lives, who instructs you in the Book and in Wisdom and teaches you those things you did not know.....O Believers, seek help with fortitude and prayer for God is with those who show fortitude"

1. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, vol.1. pp.297-310.
2. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol.1. p.112.

(2:151-153). The Holy Prophet Muhammad was sent to the people to teach the Book and Wisdom and, above all, to purify them of all evil. Purification here includes all its meanings explained above. The Messenger is expected to purify individuals of all types of evil and bring them towards moral purity, honesty, integrity and righteousness. He assists them to develop their personalities to full measure and utmost growth and attain real success and prosperity in both the worlds. Thus the work of purification by the Holy Prophet is comprehensive and goes far beyond the physical needs of a human being. He purifies them, individuals as well as society, through the process of wisdom (*hikmat*) and prayer (*salat*). The institution of prayer plays a leading part in this process of purification. This is why the *Holy Qur'an* advises people to seek help with patience and prayer in the achievement of perfect purification and full growth of the self and continuing success in life.

An important function of the Messengers since the birth of Adam, has been to purify human personality through the process of prayer. They used all the possible means and methods with wisdom and intelligence to convince the people of the immense benefit of prayer. They had to pass through various stages before they actually attained the desired end.

Gradually prayer creates *taqwa* in the hearts of individuals, who, slowly but surely, begin to tremble in the Presence of God with *khushu* and *khudu*. And through this state of submission and humility in prayer, they are likely to attain purification of self and finally reach the ultimate goal of peace and tranquillity (*itminan*) in communion with their Lord. Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismael, while raising the foundation of the Ka'ba, prayed to God to raise a Messenger among his people who would purify them: "Our Lord; send amongst them a

Messenger of their own, who will rehearse *ayat* to them and instruct them in scriptures and wisdom, and purify them" (2:129). The prayer of God's Messengers was accepted and God sent that Messenger among the Arabs: "Allah did confer a great favour on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the *ayat* of Allah, purifying them" (62:2,3-164). Obviously, a great and an important function of every Messenger has been to purify his people of all evil, to help them grow and live rightly.

The people who purify themselves in accordance with the teaching of the Messengers attain real success and prosperity in this world and in the Hereafter: "He is successful who purifies himself and glorifies the name of his Lord and prays" (87:14-15). Purification is used here in a very comprehensive sense. It means leaving the life of *shirk* (idolatry) and *kufir* (unbelief) and entering into the fold of faith (*iman*), abstaining from immoral ways and living virtuously, and replacing evil deeds with good deeds. Thus the first step towards God is to cleanse ourselves of all impurities of body, mind and soul. And for this purpose we are advised to glorify the name of our Lord (*dhikr Allah*) and practise regular prayer, which will help us to achieve our total purification. And as soon as we have purified ourselves, we are assured of everlasting success and prosperity in this world as well as in the next world. The first process in the practise of prayer is the cleanliness of the body, clothes and place of worship; in other words, physical cleanliness is an essential prerequisite of prayer and the acquiring of the state of *khushu* and *khudu* in its performance. And the first step in piety and righteousness is to cleanse the mind and the soul of all impurities by acquiring *taqwa* of God in the form of *khushu* and *khudu* in prayer. Then and only then is one in a proper state to receive

the blessings of God and real peace and tranquillity of spirit (the state of *itminan* in the companionship of God. This is what is referred to briefly in the above-mentioned verse of the *Holy Qur'an*. (3)

Again in *Surah Ta Ha*: "Gardens of Eternity, beneath which rivers flow; they all dwell therein for ever: Such is the reward of those who purify themselves (of evil) " (20:76). Thus those who purify themselves of evil and attain righteousness in their actions are indeed successful; whereas those who corrupt themselves fail in this life and in the Hereafter; "Truly he succeeds who purifies it (the soul); and he fails who corrupts it" (91:9-10).

People who keep themselves away from evil and wicked things, develop an attitude of goodness and try to reach the height of *taqwa* will certainly be successful. On the other hand, those who suppress instead of helping the growth and development of virtuous tendencies in themselves and encourage evil tendencies to such a degree that they overpower the faculties of goodness and *taqwa*, leaving it like a corpse in a grave, will be unsuccessful. (4) It is a very noble goal to achieve spotless purity in thought, word and deed. Such a high standard can only be attained with the Grace and Blessing of God: (5) "And were it not for the grace and mercy of God on you, no one of you would ever have been pure, but God does purify whom He pleases. And God sees and knows everything" (24:21). Man is continuously tempted towards evil and wickedness and if God had not equipped him with wisdom and knowledge, it would have been practically impossible for him on his own to attain a high standard of purity and goodness. (6)

3. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A. Yusuf Ali, p.1725.

4. *Tafheem al Qur'an*, vol. vi. p.354.

5. A. Yusuf Ali, op.cit, p.901.

6. *Tafheem al Qur'an*, vol.111. pp371-372.

It may here be pointed out that God's law of Nature that grants purity to some is not blind but is based on His All-knowing Powers. He knows who exerts himself for goodness and who runs after evil. He is aware of man's hidden designs and open actions and grants purity to some and denies it to others on the basis of His Knowledge. (6) It is reported by Zeid bin Arqam that the Holy Prophet used to pray, "O God; grant my soul its *taqwa*, purify it. You are the Only One Who can purify it, You are its Guardian and Patron" And Abdullah bin Abbas reported another tradition of the Holy Prophet with the same meaning. This shows that, in fact, man can only desire, and make an effort for, *taqwa* and *tazkiya*. As far as its attainment is concerned, it is entirely dependent upon God's Grace. Likewise with crookedness. God does not suppress any one's soul by force or outward coercion, but when someone is bent on evil and crookedness, God deprives him of *Taqwa* and *Tazkiya* and leaves him to bury his soul in the filth of evil and crookedness. (7)

God has shown the Right Way through His Messengers, the difference between right and wrong and between light and darkness. Those who follow the right course according to the directions given by the Messengers reach the goal of success and prosperity. On the other hand, those who are misguided and do not care for the Right Guidance, darken their souls by indulging in evil ways of life and losing themselves in it. They are the people who fail to purify their souls. They are the people who have corrupted their souls and made them unfit to receive the Blessings and Light of God.

It is all for the benefit of man himself. Whoever practises prayer to purify his soul and to acquire the goodness and light of God does it for his own good: "Thou canst but admonish such as fear their

7. *Tafheem al Qur'an*, vol. vi., pp.354-355.

Lord unseen and establish prayer. And whoever purifies himself (through prayer) does it for the benefit of his own self" (35:18). And is really the best and most effective objective means of purifying one's self of lower motives in life. One is face to face with God in prayer and this feeling and the state of mind that one is standing in the Presence of Almighty helps to purify one's mind and heart of all impurities and mean motives of the self.

But this state of mind can only be achieved by those who have already acquired *taqwa* of God in their hearts, so that when they stand in prayer, they stand with extreme reverence, humility and submission (*khushu* and *khudu*). In other words, purification comes only after one has acquired *taqwa* of God in his heart. And people who have no *taqwa* in their hearts either do not practise regular prayer at all or if they do, they do not observe all its essential conditions and, consequently, fail to achieve anything from it. *picty comes prior to purifying*

The believers are commanded to pay *zakat* out of their annual savings and property to purify their wealth. And those who do not pay this compulsory levy are warned of grave consequences in this life and Hereafter. The first Caliph of the Holy Prophet went so far as to declare *jihad* against those who refused to pay *zakat* after the death of the Holy Prophet and quoted this verse of the *Holy Qur'an*: "But (even so) if they spend, establish regular prayer, and practice regular charity.....they are your brethren in Faith" (9:11). This is because God wanted to purify their wealth through this payment: "Of their goods take away, so that you might cleanse and purify them." (9:103)

Zakat, an obligatory *sadaqah*, is so called because of its purifying effect. It is a functional name and clearly describes its purpose of purification.

Ibn Abbas told how, when this verse was revealed, "And those who hoard gold and silver" (9:34), the Muslims were grieved about it and 'Umar told them he would dispel their grief. He therefore went and told the Messenger of God that his Companions were grieved by this verse, and received the reply, "God has made *zakat* obligatory simply to purify your remaining property". (8)

Just as *zakat* is a compulsory '*ibadah*' on the believers to purify their wealth, prayer is an obligatory '*ibadah*' to purify their body, mind and heart of all kinds of evil from within and without. The most outstanding and significant function of the Messenger is to purify believers through the establishment of prayer, payment of *zakat* and observance of fasting in the month of Ramadan. And these forms of *ibadah* are made obligatory on the believers to purify their wealth, body, mind and soul of all kinds of evil and impurities.

Khushu and Khudu

The words, *khushu* and *khudu* are both used to describe the physical condition and inner feeling of a person. *Khashiah* is the condition of the heart; it is the fear of the Day of Judgement. And *khudu* is the effect of this condition on the physical self of a person producing humility, submission and lowness: "For believers are only those whose hearts tremble with awe whenever the Name of Allah is mentioned to them, whose faith is strengthened when His *ayat* are recited to them, who put their trust in their Lord and who establish prayer" (8:2-3).

"This implies that a man's faith increases on every occasion he acknowledges the Revelations of God to be true, and submits to them. Most surely his faith increases and grows whenever he surrenders

8. Abu Daud.

himself to the Book of God and to the teachings of the Holy Prophet, though they be against his own desires, his opinions, his conceptions, his theories, his habits, his interests, his lusts, his comforts, his affections and his friendships. For, instead of changing the teachings, he changes himself in accordance with the Commands of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, and accepts them for his guidance. In contrast to this, if a believer hesitates to accept these, his faith begins to decrease and fade away." (9)

The first sign of true believers "whose hearts tremble with awe" is that they are fully conscious of the Grandeur, Majesty and Sublimity of God. Therefore, they always fear Him. Whenever the name of God is mentioned before them, whenever they are reminded of Him, whenever any thing in the name of God is presented to them, they listen to it with deep feelings of fear and *khashiah*. In other words, the first requisite of *iman* is fear (*khashiah*) of God, which comes from a true conception of His Grandeur and Sublimity and of His Attributes of Justice, Wisdom, Lordship and Mercy. And from the same conception comes 'fear of God' (*taqwa*) referred to in the above mentioned verse of the *Qur'an*.

The second sign of people who believe is that when the *ayat* of God are recited to them, their faith is increased and strengthened. Here *ayat* means, Commandments and Laws of God. It means that after faith in God, the believers, most desired thing is to know the likes and Dislikes of God and a knowledge of His Commands and what He approves. And this knowledge increases the intensity of their *iman*. *Iman* is like a root and Commandments and laws of *Shariah* are like the branches and leaves which grow from it. In other words, the whole of the *Shariah* is a

9. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol. 1v., p. 125.

manifestation of *iman* and details of its inner domain. When ever any demand of *shariah* comes before them big or small, it becomes a trial for their *iman*. But they willingly and with pleasure accept it, with the result that their *iman* becomes stronger and stronger: "When the believers saw the troops, they said, 'This is what God and His Messenger promised us, and God and His Messenger told us what was true'." And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience" (33:22).

The third sign of people who believe is that they fully trust their Lord. In other words, they consider that success in this world and the Hereafter lies in obeying their Lord's Commandments, i.e., the demands of *iman*, whether they are hard or easy, whether they damage their worldly interests or benefit them, and whether they break relations or unite them. They believe this so much that even if they have to give their life to obey them, they are sure that this is the way to attain eternal life. They have full trust in their Lord that whatever He has Commanded and whatever test He has put upon them is entirely for their own benefit. No action of God or His Conduct with His servants is without Wisdom or Benefit and Mercy and Blessing.

The fourth sign is that they practise prayer and spend out of what God has given them. This is the main quality because it organises and holds together the rest, whereby *iman* cleanses and improves the believers. Finally there are the two qualities, prayer and charity (*infaq*), which are comprehensive and inclusive of all others and also act as guardian and protector of them all. Regular prayer helps to build, develop, strengthen and thereby safeguard all those qualities and never lets the believers slacken at any time". (10)

10. *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, vol. 111., pp. 21-23.

This comprehensive quality of prayer is well described in this verse of *Surah al-Baqarah*: "And truly it (prayer) is hard except for those who are humble-minded (*kha'shian*)" (2:45). Prayer is a hard task for those who are unbelievers and do not believe in the Day of Judgement. But it is a pleasant and joyful duty for those who willingly and happily obey their Lord and believe in the Day Of Judgement. It means that prayer is really hard and only those can bear its burden who believe in God and whose hearts are humble from fear of the Hereafter. There is no doubt that prayer is very hard, except for those whom God has rightly guided and guarded and who are of lowly spirit. *Khushu*, in fact, is humility, submission, lowliness and meekness. The word is also used for a low voice and cast-down eyes. And *khushu* is the foundation of both fortitude and prayer, especially of the latter. True believers really feel *khudu* in the Presence of their Lord and their hearts tremble and tremor due to His Grandeur and Greatness when they stand in prayer or hear His *ayat* recited before them. Prayer is a good practice of those who are full of *khash-iah*, for they come before their Lord with humility and submission: "Seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer; it is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,.... who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord" (2:45). People who practise regular prayer in obedience to God's Command are touched with the deepest emotions and an extreme feeling of earnest humility: "They fall down on their faces in prayer in tears, and increase their (earnest) humility." (17:109)

When the verses of the *Qur'an* are recited to those who believe in God and the Last Day, they feel the sublimity of the Divine Message and of its Truth and believe with earnest humility in what they are told by God and His Messenger. This is the attitude

of the righteous people towards the teaching of the *Qur'an*, because when they recognise the Truth, their whole body and soul are shaken and their eyes overflow with tears (3:113-114, 119 and 5:83-84). They become faithful and obedient servants of God and practise regular prayer to demonstrate their allegiance to His Commandments. The state of such people is described in the *Qur'an*: the skin of those who fear their Lord trembles thereat; then their skins and their hearts do soften to the celebration of God's praises (*dhikr Allah*)" (39:23). "The skin is the outer layer of the body. It receives the first shock from the impact of anything unusual, and it trembles and its hair stands on end under excitement. So in spiritual matters the first stimulation from God's Message is external. Those who receive Faith do so, as it were, with tremor and not with apathy. But the next stage is that it penetrates their outer nature and goes right into their hearts. Their whole nature is 'softened' to receive the beneficent Message, and it transforms them through and through." (11)

The Holy *Qur'an* invites people to come to their Lord with submission and humbleness, "Call on your Lord with humility and in secret; indeed He does not like the transgressors (7:55)". Humility can be expressed in movements and postures of the body as well as in words and in worship. The best form of humility is that which combines both the movements of the body and words in complete harmony. And prayer is fully expressive of all these signs of humbleness in the most effective way. *Khufiya* means quietly and secretly and it is one of the properties of humility as well as guarantor of its sincerity. Any deed done in secret and quietly is free from the stigma of hypocrisy (*riya*) and also one can present his petition before the Sovereign in any manner he likes without the knowledge of other people.

11. A Yusuf Ali, op.cit., p.1244.

Fear of God unseen (*khashiah*) is described as one of the qualities of the believers: "The mosques of God shall be visited and maintained only by those people who believe in God and the Last Day, and establish prayer and pay (*zakat*) dues, and fear none but Allah, for these alone are expected to follow the Right Way" (9:18). And in *Surah al-Hajj*: "To those whose hearts, when God is mentioned, are filled with fear, who show patient perseverance over their afflictions, keep up regular prayer and spend (in charity) out of what We have bestowed upon them" (22:35). Some of the qualities of the devotees are mentioned here: (1) Humility before God makes them receptive and prepares them to listen to God's Message; (2) Fear of God, which is akin to love, touches their heart, and penetrates through to their inmost being; (3) They take their trials patiently and they go on in a course of righteousness with constancy; (4) Their prayer now is not a matter of form, but a real communion with God, with a sense of confidence such as a faithful servant feels in the presence of a king and loving master; and (5) Gratitude to God, as shown by practical acts of charity to all fellow-creatures". (12)

Eternal success is forecast for such people who practise prayer with strict regularity in extreme humility: "The believers must (eventually) win through,.....those who humble themselves in their prayer.....and who (strictly) guard their prayer.....(23:1-3,9). And in *Surah al-Anbiya*: "They call upon us with love and reverence and humble themselves before Us" (21:91). And this fear is due to their belief in their accountability on the Day of Judgement: "Who realise that at last they shall meet their Lord and shall return to Him." (2:46). This verse of the *Qur'an* throws some light on the internal condition of *Khashian*, that their

12. A.Yusuf Ali, op.cit, p.860.

humbleness is due to their extreme fear of the Last Day and their meeting with God. The state of *khashiah* of the worshipper in prostration before his Lord is described by some authors in these words: (13) "This is the gnuflexion of love which breaks into pieces the shackles of law, habit and custom that have imprisoned the spirit of man. The devotee covers his forehead with dust in front of the Almighty and surrenders himself for the moment to the promptings of the heart. Now, there is neither a limit to submission and repentance nor a restriction on the shedding of tears. A storm rages within him and the cup of his heart begins to overflow. The Holy Companions have related about the Prophet that during the *sajdah* (prostration) sounds used to come from his bosom as if a pot was placed on a fire and something was boiling in it. It is related by Amr bin el-Aas that once the sacred Prophet let out a deep sigh at the end of a *sajdah* and said, "O Lord; Hast Thou not promised that Thou shall not send down Thy Punishment on the believers if I am present among them? Hast Thou not promised that Thine Anger shall not overtake them as long as they offer repentance?" This shows the intensity of the state of *khashiah* in the Holy Prophet.

The promise of victory for such people is again mentioned in *Surah an-Nur*: "It is such as obey God and His Messenger, and fear God and do right, that will win in the end" (24:52). And forgiveness is also granted: "As for those who fear their Lord unseen, for them is forgiveness and a great reward" (67:12). The benefit of prayer is reaped by those who observe all its prerequisites and conditions and follow its directives in real earnestness in their practical life. They are here told how essential the habit of regular prayer is to their

13. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Four Pillars of Islam*. pp. 34-35.

spiritual welfare and development (2:238).

A cursory glance at these verses of the *Holy Qur'an* shows that they commence with prayer and, after explaining a few things about *Din Allah* (the religion of God) and its basic moral principles, end with prayer. Besides, the word *khushu*, which is the real spirit of prayer, is used at the beginning of the verses, and *muhafizat*, which is a comprehensive interpretation of all its physical and external prerequisites as well as a pointer to the fact that it is the strict and regular observance of prayer which safeguards the other pillars of Islam, is used at the end. This is a clear indication that prayer is beneficial to a believer only if it is performed with extreme earnestness and devotion, with all its essential, external and internal, accompaniments, i.e., cleanliness and purity of body and mind and utter submission, obedience, humility and devotion of the heart, without which it will be a pointless exercise. If prayer is to have any effect on a believer, it must be performed with strict regularity with real *khashiah* in the heart and its visible signs of *khudu* on his physical self, as required in the above-mentioned verses of the *Holy Qur'an*.

"Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord unseen and establish regular prayer" (35:18). Prayer is one of the important means of purifying ourselves of lower motives in life for it brings us very close to our Lord: "Who feared (Allah) most Gracious unseen, and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him)" (50:33). There is a very slight but delicate difference between fear and *khashiah*. Fear shows one's helplessness in relation to the other's strength and power, whereas *khashiah* is used to denote that awe and dread which affects the heart of an individual on account of the grandeur and greatness of some authority. Here *khashiah* is used to show that fear of God in the heart of a believer

is produced not merely because he is afraid of His Punishment but because feelings of His Grandeur and Glory are a constant source of awe and dread of him. *Khashiah* does influence the physical movements and conditions of a believer in that it makes him very humble and devout: "Guard strictly your (habit) of prayer, and..... stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind)" (2:238).

Two things are mentioned in this verse: First, a believer is told strictly to guard the institution of prayer under all conditions and never to relax in its observance. Secondly, he is advised to be obedient, submissive and humble before his Lord. There seems to be a close relationship between prayer and humility. Gradually regularity in prayer does teach an individual humility before God and obedience to His Command. A believer offers his prayer in extreme submission and with a lowly spirit and this constant practice makes him really humble and obedient. The use of the word *qanut* is a clear indication that the Command "strictly to guard your prayer" is inclusive of obedience to God and humility in His Presence.

There are many traditions which describe the state of *khashiah* of the Holy Prophet and his Companions during prayer. Mutarrif bin Abdullah bin ash-shikhkir quoted his father as saying, "I came to the Prophet when he was engaged in prayer, and heard a sound from within him like the bubbling of a pot, meaning that he was weeping." Fazal bin Abbas reported God's Messenger as saying, "Prayer is in two *rakat*; after every two *rakat tashshahud* and prayer with humility, lowliness and humbleness. And he who does not show this (humility) his prayer is imperfect." (14) It is reported about Ali, the fourth Caliph, that whenever he thought of prayer his

spiritual welfare and development (2:238).

A cursory glance at these verses of the *Holy Qur'an* shows that they commence with prayer and, after explaining a few things about *Din Allah* (the religion of God) and its basic moral principles, end with prayer. Besides, the word *khushu*, which is the real spirit of prayer, is used at the beginning of the verses, and *muhafizat*, which is a comprehensive interpretation of all its physical and external prerequisites as well as a pointer to the fact that it is the strict and regular observance of prayer which safeguards the other pillars of Islam, is used at the end. This is a clear indication that prayer is beneficial to a believer only if it is performed with extreme earnestness and devotion, with all its essential, external and internal, accompaniments, i.e., cleanliness and purity of body and mind and utter submission, obedience, humility and devotion of the heart, without which it will be a pointless exercise. If prayer is to have any effect on a believer, it must be performed with strict regularity with real *khashiah* in the heart and its visible signs of *khudu* on his physical self, as required in the above-mentioned verses of the *Holy Qur'an*.

"Thou canst but admonish such as fear their Lord unseen and establish regular prayer" (35:18). Prayer is one of the important means of purifying ourselves of lower motives in life for it brings us very close to our Lord: "Who feared (Allah) most Gracious unseen, and brought a heart turned in devotion (to Him)" (50:33). There is a very slight but delicate difference between fear and *khashiah*. Fear shows one's helplessness in relation to the other's strength and power, whereas *khashiah* is used to denote that awe and dread which affects the heart of an individual on account of the grandeur and greatness of some authority. Here *khashiah* is used to show that fear of God in the heart of a believer

is produced not merely because he is afraid of His Punishment but because feelings of His Grandeur and Glory are a constant source of awe and dread of him. *Khashiah* does influence the physical movements and conditions of a believer in that it makes him very humble and devout: "Guard strictly your (habit) of prayer, and..... stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind)" (2:238).

Two things are mentioned in this verse: First, a believer is told strictly to guard the institution of prayer under all conditions and never to relax in its observance. Secondly, he is advised to be obedient, submissive and humble before his Lord. There seems to be a close relationship between prayer and humility. Gradually regularity in prayer does teach an individual humility before God and obedience to His Command. A believer offers his prayer in extreme submission and with a lowly spirit and this constant practice makes him really humble and obedient. The use of the word *qanut* is a clear indication that the Command "strictly to guard your prayer" is inclusive of obedience to God and humility in His Presence.

There are many traditions which describe the state of *khashiah* of the Holy Prophet and his Companions during prayer. Mutarrif bin Abdullah bin ash-shik-hkkir quoted his father as saying, "I came to the Prophet when he was engaged in prayer, and heard a sound from within him like the bubbling of a pot, meaning that he was weeping." Fazal bin Abbas reported God's Messenger as saying, "Prayer is in two *rakat*; after every two *rakat tashshahud* and prayer with humility, lowliness and humbleness. And he who does not show this (humility) his prayer is imperfect." (14) It is reported about Ali, the fourth Caliph, that whenever he thought of prayer his

body trembled with fear. (15)

Many incidents have been reported about the state of *khashiah* of pious men: someone enquired from Hatam A'sm about the state of his prayer; he replied, "I do one external *wudu'* (ablution) and one internal, the external *wudu'* with water and the internal one with repentance. Then I come into the mosque and stand for prayer so that *bait al haram* is in front of my eyes; I see Paradise on my right, Hell on my left and *pul sirat* under my feet and the Angel of death standing behind me. I say *takbir* with exaltation, stand in *qiy'am* with propriety, do recitation with fear, *ruku* with humility (*khushu*) and modesty (*tawadhu*), prostration while thinking of the place of Ibrahim (*Muqami Ibrahim*) between my eye-brows, sitting between two prostrations (*jilisa*) with gentleness and manners and do *salam* (end the prayer) with gratefulness (*shukr*). (16)

Abdullah bin Mubarik said, "I saw a pious woman in my childhood. Once a scorpion bit her many times while she was praying but she did not move at all. When she finished prayer I asked, 'Mother why did you not remove the scorpion from you?' She replied, 'you are a child; how could I start my own work during God's work?' 'Abu al Khair Qata' had cancer in his leg. Doctors advised him to have his feet removed but he did not agree. After consultation among themselves, his followers decided to cut his foot while he was praying. One day after prayer he found his foot was cut but he did not feel anything during his prayer. (16)

This is often experienced by pious men. When someone reaches that stage of friendship (nearness) with God obedience and submission to Him not only

15. *Tirmizi*, vol. 1, p. 225.

16. *Kashf Al Mahjoob*. Urdu translation by Mian Muhammad Tufail. pp. 307-311.

does not cause any hardship or inconvenience to the worshipper but actually gives him pleasure and comfort, he feels discomfort and pain without it. In fact, a feeling of pain and grief in obeying any Command depends on one's relations with and love for his Master and Lord. The stronger the ties of relationship and the deeper the feelings of love with the Beloved, the easier and more pleasing become the obedience to His Commands. This is why the Holy Prophet prayed so much every day that sometimes his legs got swollen but this did not reduce his love and enthusiasm for prayer which continued increasing. Feelings of pain and grief in any work are felt when it is done for monetary reward or under compulsion, but when anything, no matter how hard and painful, is done to please one's beloved, there is nothing more pleasant and delightful on the earth than this act. (16)

"Hazrat Amr bin Abdullah feared God very much. When he prayed, his daughter beat a drum and women of the house held conversation but he did not hear them. One day he was asked, 'Does your mind think of anything in prayer?' He said, 'Yes, it thinks about its stay before God and going from this world into another world'. It is said about Muslim bin Yasar that while he was praying one day in a mosque, one of its corners fell down but he did not hear anything. Hazrat Abu Darda said, 'It is the rule of religion that when a man goes to prayer, he should perform all its necessary things so that his mind becomes free from thoughts. It is written in the *Torah*: 'O son of Adam, don't be embarrassed to stand up before Me in prayer in a state of weeping, because then I come near your mind and you also see My Light. The Holy Prophet said, 'The softness, weeping and victory which a praying man feels in his mind bespeaks the presence of God in his mind! '(17)

17. Gazzali's *Ihya Ulum id Din*, pp. 180-182.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said : "God does not respond to the prayer of a man who does not observe it with his mind and body." When Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) stood in prayer, the voice of his heart (due to *khashiah*) could be heard from a distance. And when the sage Sayeed Tanukhi prayed, his eyes shed tears which flowed down his beard. Sufiyan Suri said, "The prayer of one who has no *khashiah* (fear of God) is meaningless." And Hasan Basari said, "The prayer which is not offered with attention hastens towards punishment." The sage Abdul Wahed said, "The portion of prayer which is said with humility of mind (*khashiah*) is accepted." The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "There are many praying men whose prayers are written to the extent of one sixth or one tenth." In other-words, only the portion of prayer which is offered with attention (*khashiah*) is written. He also said, "There are many praying men who do not gain anything from their prayer except fatigue and effort. And nothing is written for a praying man except what he understands in his prayer. *Munajat* without attention is no *munajat* at all." (18)

Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "Supplicate God when you are assured of being answered, and know that God does not answer a supplication which comes from a careless and inattentive heart." (19) And Abu Dhar reported God's Messenger as saying, "God most high continues to turn favourably towards a servant while he is engaged in prayer so long as he does not look to the side, but if he does so He departs from him." (20)

18. Gazzali's *Ihya Ulum id Din*, pp.171 -172.

19. *Mishkat*, vol.1.op,cit,p.473 (transmitted by *Tirmizi*).

20. *Mishkat*., vol.1.,p.203 (transmitted by *Abu Daud*, *Nasai* and *Darimi*).

"there is no doubt that the object of all religious acts is the glorification of God and if that object is not achieved, prayer is useless because it is merely the moving of the tongue without any purpose. The words must be uttered with humility and presence of mind, otherwise they are ineffective in achieving anything. If you recite in your prayer: 'Show us the straight way', without paying any attention to what you are saying, then it is merely the movement of your tongue and nothing else. The object of the recitation of the *Qur'an* and remembrance of God is to praise God, to supplicate Him and invoke Him with humility and lowness, but if your mind remains absent at that time and does not know what and with whom it is talking, then it is sheer habit and that is not the object of the prayer." (18)

COMMUNION WITH GOD

The prayer is the means through which man is able to initiate and maintain his relationship with God. It takes him away from the struggles of this world and brings him closer to his Lord. It enable him to continue his economic activities without being forgetful of his duty to his Creator. In other words, the prayer is the only effective means through which man can keep in constant companionship with God in the hustle and bustle of life. A man may be doctor, a scientist, a teacher, a businessman, a labourer, a banker or a manager, and may be all the time busy in his daily work, but so long as he practises regular prayer, he has the most effective and practical way of keeping his link with God. This is a constant reminder of the reality of his servitude to Him. And this relationship can guard him and keep him on the path of righteousness and justice. "And if My servant ask you, O Messenger, concerning Me, tell them that I am quite close to them. I hear and answer the prayer of the humble petitioner, when he calls Me. Convey this to them, O Messenger; perhaps they may be guided aright" (2:186).

This verse points to the close relationship of man with his Lord. It tells him in plain words that God, in spite of His Majesty and Grandeur, is very close to him. He can hear his prayers and He can answer him. He is never distant or remote from His servants. He is the most sincere friend and constant companion of His slaves. He always comes to their help whenever they ask for it. Though they cannot see Him, He always looks after them and guards them against evil. And He is always ready and willing to listen to their prayer and to help them.

God says, "Though you cannot see Me and feel Me

with your senses, you must never imagine that I am far from you. Nay, I am near to every servant of Mine that he can invoke Me and place his requests before Me wherever he may be. So much so that I hear and answer even those requests which are not expressed in words but are made only in the innermost heart. As to the false and impotent gods you have created in your ignorance and folly, you have to go to them, and even then they do not hear and answer you. But, here am I, the Sovereign, the Absolute Ruler of the boundless universe and Possessor of all the Powers and Authority, and so close to you that I can hear and answer your call for help. You need no recommendation, or intercession to approach Me. You call Me anywhere and any time you like, and I will be there with you to listen to you and help you. You should free yourself from the folly of running from door to door after false associates, and accept My invitation and turn to Me and Trust Me and submit to Me and become My servant." (1)

"It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein" (50:16). "God Created man, and gave him his limited free will. God knows the innermost desires and motives of a man even better than the man does himself. He is nearer to a man than the man's own jugular vein. As the bloodstream is the vehicle of life and consciousness, the phrase "Nearer than the jugular vein" implies that God knows more truly the innermost state of our feelings and consciousness than does our own ego". (2) It means that God's Power and knowledge has encircled man from within and without in such a way that even the source of his life is not as close to him as God's Power and knowledge. He has not to move or go over to his place to listen to

1. *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, vol.1.p.132.

2. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A.Yusuf Ali, p.1412.

them because He is fully aware of his requests and desires, expressed or hidden in his heart. (3)

The Holy Messenger explicitly described prayer as the *miraj* (ascent) of the believers. It was on the night of the *miraj* that the Holy Messenger had direct contact with Almighty God and experienced the great mysteries of the human soul. And it was on that very night that he was given the gift of daily prayer by God. The Holy Messenger advised his followers to perform prayer properly and regularly so that they might also experience the Divine Mysteries. Anyone who is sincere in his prayer and is capable of communicating with the Divine Being, has no obstacle in his way. The Holy Messenger explained the significance of prayer in these words: "You pray to God as if you see Him, and if you cannot do so, think that He sees you."

If you offer prayer regularly in this manner, you are sure to develop a very close relationship with God. The *Holy Qur'an* declares in clear words: "Put thy trust in the Mighty, the Merciful, Who sees thee standing forth (in prayer), and thy movements among those who prostrate themselves. For it is He who hears and knows all things". (26:217-220) Again, in *Surah Yunas*, it is said: "And you are not engaged in any business nor do you recite any portion of the *Qur'an*, nor you do any work, but We are witness over you when you are engaged therein. And not the weight of an atom in the earth, or in the heaven is hidden from your Lord, nor anything less than that nor greater, but it is all registered in a clear record" (10:61).

Nothing in the universe is hidden from its Creator, Who knows the smallest as well as the biggest thing. He even knows and hears what is spoken or hidden

in the hearts of people. He is fully aware of what we conceal and what we declare: "If you speak the word aloud (it is no matter), surely He knows the secret and most hidden" (20:7). God knows not only our secrets which are hidden in our hearts, but He knows even the secrets of the subconscious mind which are hidden even from us: "He knows the hidden and the manifest..... It is the same to Him whether any of you conceal his speech or speak it openly, whether he hides himself by night or walks forth freely by day. For each person has guardians before him and behind him, who watch over him by Allah's Command" (13:9-10).

These verses clearly show that even our most hidden thoughts or motives are known to Him at all times. So if we offer our prayer sincerely and solemnly, we will undoubtedly be able to communicate with Him and develop a very intimate relationship with Him. "God not only directly watches over whatever each person does, and is fully aware of everything he does, but He has also appointed such Guardians as accompany him everywhere and keep a full record of all his deeds. This has been stated here to warn those people who live their lives under the delusion that they have been left absolutely free to do whatever they like and will not be required to render an account of what they did in this worldly life. The warning is that such people invite their own retribution". (4)

Once the Holy Messenger told a man not to spit in front of him while in prayer for then he is engaged in very private talk with his Lord. It is reported by Ibn 'Umar that one night, when the Holy Messenger was confined to the mosque (in *itikaf*), he peeped through the door and said: "O people; when a person is engaged in prayer, he is engaged in conversation

with his Lord; he should know what he is talking about". This shows what effect prayer should have on the person who is performing it, and what an intimate relationship it creates and develops between man and his Lord.

As prayer is a formal conversation or dialogue between man and his Creator, it is essential that the former should stand solemnly and respectfully in prayer. The *Holy Qur'an* teaches the believers how to stand before their Lord in these words: "Observe strictly the prayer and take particular care to offer your prayer in the most excellent way; stand before Allah like devoted servants" (2:238). "The guarding of prayers is not simply the observance of the outward form; it is both the form and the spirit to which attention is drawn. Prayers are to be said at stated times and a particular method is to be observed, for if regularity and method had not been adopted, the institution of prayer, which is so helpful in keeping alive a true faith in God in the heart of a Muslim, would have passed into mere idealism as in other religions. The fact is that to keep the spirit of man in touch with the Divine Spirit, an external form is necessary. The external form is needed to bring the inner faculty into exercise. As regards the spirit of prayer, attention is called to it again and again in the *Holy Qur'an*. On this occasion, the injunction to guard the prayers is followed by the words: "Stand up truly obedient to Allah." That is the spirit which aims at generating the spirit of obedience to God". (5)

This verse, therefore, truly teaches the believers how to stand solemnly and respectfully before Almighty God in order to win His Favours and Pleasure. And it is true to a great extent that the external

5. *Holy Qur'an*, translated by A.Yusuf Ali, p.103.

behaviour of a man is an index to his inner devotion or feeling towards God. If you really obey God and submit your whole life to His laws, you will feel pleasure and happiness in standing solemnly before Him and therefore showing your respect to Him. And the nearer and closer you are to the Sovereign and All-knowing Lord, the greater will be the respect and solemnity in your external behaviour.

There is no doubt that God hears the prayers of His servants and listens to their supplications, whether made in public or in secret, and answers them. God has conveyed this Message to His servants through His Messengers, that if they turn to Him or call on Him for their needs or for any other matter, He is always there to meet them and grant their requests. He is not far from them but is very near to them, nearer than their jugular vein. (*Qur'an*, 50:16) A study of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet show that a man is fully equipped with the power and ability to initiate such a dialogue with His Creator. There is ample evidence of this in the *Qur'an*:

"Surely, I am God, there is no god but I, obey Me only and establish prayer to remember Me" (20:14). And in the same *Surah*, Prophet Musa (Moses) and his brother Harun (Aaron) are told: "Go, you and your brother, with My Signs, and slacken not either of you in My remembrance" (20:42). A warning is also given to those who refrain from remembrance of Him: "But whosoever turns away from My remembrance, surely he shall have a wretched life in the world, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection" (20:124). Obviously, 'remember Me' requires presence of mind as opposed to absence of mind or heedlessness. A person who is heedless in prayer cannot be offering his prayer for the object of remembrance of God; such people are reminded in these words: "So woe to the worshippers who are

neglectful of their prayers" (107:4-5).

The Holy Prophet said, "Supplication is worship" and then he recited, "And your Lord said, 'If you call Me I will answer you' "(40:60). (6) According to Abu Hurairah, God's Messenger said, "God will be angry with those who do not make requests to Him". He also reported God's Messenger as saying, "If anyone finds pleasure in receiving an answer from God in times of difficulty, he should make many supplications when times are easy". Again he reported, "Supplicate God when you are assured of being answered, and know that God does not answer a supplication which comes from a careless and inattentive heart". Salman reported God's Messenger as saying, "Your Lord is munificent and generous, and is ashamed to turn away empty the hands of a servant when he raises them before Him." (7)

Then there are other verses of the *Qur'an* which invite man to direct dialogue with His Lord: "If you remember Me, I will remember you" (2:152) And again, in the same *Surah al-Baqarah*: "When My servants ask you, O Prophet, concerning Me, I am indeed close to them, I listen to the prayer of every worshipper when he calls on Me" (2:186). Abu Dhar reported God's Messenger as saying that God said, "If anyone draws the length of a span near Me, I shall draw the length of cubit near him, and if anyone draws the length of a cubit near Me I shall draw the length of a fathom near him. If anyone comes to Me walking I shall come to him running." (8) Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying that God said, "If My servant keeps drawing near to Me with optional prayers (*nawafil*), I shall love him,

6. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.474. (transmitted by Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Nasai and Ibn Majah)

7. *Mishkat*, vol.1. p.473 (transmitted by Tirmizi).

8. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.476 (Muslim transmitted it).

and when I love him I shall be the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps and the feet with which he walks. If he asks from Me I shall certainly give him refuge". (9)

Hanzala bin Ar-Rabi reported God's Messenger as saying, "By Him in whose hand is my soul, if you continue in what you have been engaged in with me and in remembering God, the angels will shake hands with you when you lie down and when you walk about." (10) Anas bin Malik reported God's Messenger as saying, "A faithful believer while in prayer is speaking private to his Lord, so he should not spit in front of him or to his right side." (11)

The most effective and readily available means to all human beings to seek nearness to God is the daily prayer. In prayer he recites the actual words of God, which bring him closer to his Creator. According to Abu Hurairah God's Messenger said that God has said, "I have divided the prayer into two halves between Me and My servant. My servant will receive what he asks". When the servant says, "Praise be to God the Lord of the universe (*Al-Hamdu Lillahi Rabbi'l-Alamin*), God says, "My servant has praised Me." When he says, "The Compassionate, the Merciful, (*Ar-Rahmani'r-Rahim*), God says, My servant has lauded Me". When he says, "Master of the Day of Judgement. (*Malliki Yaumi 'd-Din*). " He says, "My servant has glorified Me. "When he says, "Thee do we worship and Thy help do we seek, (*Iyyaka Na'abudu Wa'iyyaka Nasta'in*)", He says, "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks". Then when he says, "Guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed, not of those who have earned Your anger nor

9. *Mishkat*, p. 477. (Bukhari transmitted it)

10. *Mishkat*, p.477 (Muslim transmitted it)

11. *Bukhari*, vol.1., p.243.

neglectful of their prayers" (107:4-5).

The Holy Prophet said, "Supplication is worship" and then he recited, "And your Lord said, 'If you call Me I will answer you' "(40:60). (6) According to Abu Hurairah, God's Messenger said, "God will be angry with those who do not make requests to Him". He also reported God's Messenger as saying, "If anyone finds pleasure in receiving an answer from God in times of difficulty, he should make many supplications when times are easy". Again he reported, "Supplicate God when you are assured of being answered, and know that God does not answer a supplication which comes from a careless and inattentive heart". Salman reported God's Messenger as saying, "Your Lord is munificent and generous, and is ashamed to turn away empty the hands of a servant when he raises them before Him." (7)

Then there are other verses of the *Qur'an* which invite man to direct dialogue with His Lord: "If you remember Me, I will remember you" (2:152) And again, in the same *Surah al-Baqarah*: "When My servants ask you, O Prophet, concerning Me, I am indeed close to them, I listen to the prayer of every worshipper when he calls on Me" (2:186). Abu Dhar reported God's Messenger as saying that God said, "If anyone draws the length of a span near Me, I shall draw the length of cubit near him, and if anyone draws the length of a cubit near Me I shall draw the length of a fathom near him. If anyone comes to Me walking I shall come to him running." (8) Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying that God said, "If My servant keeps drawing near to Me with optional prayers (*nawafil*), I shall love him,

6. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.474. (transmitted by Ahmad, Tirmizi, Abu Daud, Nasai and Ibn Majah)

7. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.473 (transmitted by Tirmizi).

8. *Mishkat*, vol.1., p.476 (Muslim transmitted it).

and when I love him I shall be the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he grasps and the feet with which he walks. If he asks from Me I shall certainly give him refuge". (9)

Hanzala bin Ar-Rabi reported God's Messenger as saying, "By Him in whose hand is my soul, if you continue in what you have been engaged in with me and in remembering God, the angels will shake hands with you when you lie down and when you walk about." (10) Anas bin Malik reported God's Messenger as saying, "A faithful believer while in prayer is speaking private to his Lord, so he should not spit in front of him or to his right side." (11)

The most effective and readily available means to all human beings to seek nearness to God is the daily prayer. In prayer he recites the actual words of God, which bring him closer to his Creator. According to Abu Hurairah God's Messenger said that God has said, "I have divided the prayer into two halves between Me and My servant. My servant will receive what he asks". When the servant says, "Praise be to God the Lord of the universe (*Al-Hamdu Lillahi Rabbi'l-Alamin*), God says, "My servant has praised Me." When he says, "The Compassionate, the Merciful, (*Ar-Rahmani'r-Rahim*), God says, My servant has lauded Me". When he says, "Master of the Day of Judgement. (*Malliki Yaumi 'd-Din*)." He says, "My servant has glorified Me. "When he says, "Thee do we worship and Thy help do we seek, (*Iyyaka Na'abudu Wa'iyyaka Nasta'in*)", He says, "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks". Then when he says, "Guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed, not of those who have earned Your anger nor

9. *Mishkat*, p. 477. (Bukhari transmitted it)

10. *Mishkat*, p.477 (Muslim transmitted it)

11. *Bukhari*, vol.1., p.243.

of those who have gone astray (*Ihdina's-Sirat Al-Mustaqim Sirat al-ladhina An-'Amta'Alaihim Ghair'l-Maghdubi'Alaihim W'ala'd-Dallin*). He says, "This is for My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks". (12)

This is how the role of prayer is shared between God and man, the One Who creates and the one who receives. It is a moment of great excitement for the latter, who gains an insight into the secret of that inner liturgical action, and a moment when the former reveals His Hidden Self to living creatures other than Himself. It is thus an act which shows interdependence of the Creator and His creation and it is also 'simultaneously prayer of God and prayer of man', though in a quite different sense. It is an experience of man in which he gains some 'intimation of God' and a further knowledge of His Presence and His Person. (13)

Recitation of the *Fatiha* (opening chapter) in prayer opens up a new field in the spiritual experience of man. It constitutes a kind of 'intimate dialogue' (*munaajat*) between man and his Creator, shared, half and half, by God and His faithful servant. As referred to earlier, a tradition of the Holy Prophet states that God says, "I have divided prayer between Myself and My faithful into halves; the one is My part, the other is his; to My faithful belongs what he asks". This makes prayer the most important element in this dialogue between the Lord and His Personal 'fedele'.

"Here then is the manner in which Ibn 'Arabi comments on the phases of a Divine service that is a dialogue, an intimate dialogue which takes as its

12. *Mishkat*, vol.1.p.169. (Muslim transmitted it)

13. Corbin Henry, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p.249-254.

'psalm' and foundation the recitation of the *Fatiha*. He distinguishes three successive moments which correspond to the phases of what we may call his 'method of prayer' and which provide us with a good indication of how he put his spirituality into practice. First, the faithful must place himself in the company of his God and 'converse' with Him. In an intermediate moment, the orant, the faithful in prayer, must imagine (*takhayyal*) his God as present in his *qibla*, that is, facing him. Finally, in a third moment, the faithful must attain to intuitive vision (*shuhud*) or visualisation (*ru'ya*), contemplating his God in the subtle centre which is the heart, and simultaneously hear the Divine Voice vibrating in all manifest things, so much so that he hears nothing else". (13)

As meditated by Ibn 'Arabi, based on the *hadith* quoted above, "its liturgical action breaks down into three phases; the first (that is, the first three verses) is the action of the faithful toward or upon his Lord; the second (the fourth verse) is a reciprocal action between the Lord and His faithful; the third (the three last verses) is an action of the Lord 'toward' and 'upon' His faithful. In each of these verses, the Divine Presence, to which the faithful makes himself present, and which he makes present to himself, is attested by a Divine 'response', vibrating as though in an undertone. This 'response', is not a poetic or rhetorical fiction, in which the Godhead is arbitrarily 'made to speak'. The Divine response merely records the event of prayer from the viewpoint of the being to whom it is addressed; it expresses the 'intention' as it attains its object, and does so by virtue of the simple fact that this intention is formulated and assumed. Thus from the standpoint of phenomenology, this Divine response is vigorously accurate." (13)

"The first three verses state the action of the faithful toward and upon the personal Lord he worships. Preceded by the ritual invocation: "In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the Merciful, they are: (1) "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the creation, (2) The Compassionate, the Merciful, (3) King on the Day of Judgement. "The Divine response to the first verse, preceded by the invocation, sets forth the event, the intention which attains its object: "Now My faithful makes Me present to himself. Now My faithful makes of Me the Glorified One. " The Divine response to the second and third verses runs: "Now My faithful sings My praise. Now he exalts My glory and puts his trust in Me." (4) "Thee alone we worship, and from thee alone do we await help ". Here the Divine response says: "Now there is a sharing in common between Myself and My faithful; to My faithful belongs what he asks". As meditated by Ibn 'Arabi, this moment of the prayer produces a community (*ishtirak*), a reciprocal action..... The three last verses constitute the last phase: (5) "Guide us in the straight path;" (6) "The path of those to whom You have given grace;" (7) "Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, or of those who have gone astray". And the Divine response: "All that belong to My faithful, for to My faithful belongs what he asks." Here, in the third phase: the action is from the Lord 'toward' and 'upon' His faithful. The faithful has and possesses what he asks - this, as we shall see, is the profound meaning of 'creative', that is, theophanic, imaginative, or mental prayer". (13)

Thus the Islamic prayer is a reciprocal action between the Creator and His creature. "The first moment prepares the way for it, the third results from it". The second moment seems to be the central point because "its intention is the keystone" of Ibn 'Arabi's interpretation of the Divine service. Ibn 'Arabi also points out that this prayer is

addressed not to God, the Absolute Sovereign and Virtual Ruler, but to concrete manifestations of that Name. The Lord manifested under the Name, "Lord of the creation", "the Compassionate, the Merciful", thus making it easier for the faithful to perceive, understand and converse with the manifest God, "Who can manifest Himself only in a direct and individualised relationship with the being to whom He is manifested, in a form which corresponds to that being's capacity". It is in this sense that man opens up *munajat* with his Lord, Who reveals Himself to him in His various manifestations because a vision of God Himself is beyond human capacity. This was made clear to Prophet Musa (Moses) when he asked to see God, "O My Lord; show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon Thee." God said, "By no means can you see Me" (7:143). (13)

Another point of great spiritual significance which Ibn 'Arabi has emphasised is the hidden desire of the Creator to make Himself known to some being and the prayer is nothing more than the fulfilment of that desire expressed by Him when He was still unknown to any being. "I was a Hidden Treasure; I yearned to be known." Thus the Identity of God is known only through man with all its manifestations and mysteries and without his being It would have remained unknown. In Ibn 'Arabi's terminology, "I am known only by you, just as you exist only by Me. This prelude establishes their community in the Divine Names it utters, since the totality of a Divine Name is constituted by this Name itself, or by a Divine Lord belonging to the world of Mystery, and by the faithful whose soul is its receptacle, the form by which and to which it is epiphanied, the two standing to one another in a reciprocal relationship of action and passion. It is the community thus resulting from the totality of their two aspects, it is this 'theopathic union' between Divine Compassion and human passion, that is expressed

in the central verse: "Thee alone do we worship... from Thee alone we await help". ((13)

Every man, however, enjoys the experience of this Divine Dialogue according to his own spiritual state. Anyone who does not perceive the Divine "Responses" in the course of prayer is not really present with his Lord. He is not really a worshipper (*musalli*) because he is not capable of hearing or seeing anything. Ibn 'Arabi's method of prayer embraces three stages or degrees of spiritual advancement: presence, audition, vision. The worshipper may feel the Presence of his Lord, hear Him or even see Him; anyone who does not experience these spiritual states, according to Ibn 'Arabi, remains outside the prayer and its effects. Naturally prayer cannot be an intimate dialogue unless there is a 'Divine Response'. (14)

Another point raised by Ibn 'Arabi with regard to 'Divine Response' in prayer is: who takes the initiative in the 'mutual dialogue'? That is to say, who plays the leading role and who the secondary? Though it is a reciprocal response and mutual dialogue between man and his lord, man plays the passive and secondary role. Man may pray but God of His Own Mercy and Grace bestows His Favours on him; he cannot originate Divine Response. The Holy Prophet also spoke in the passive when he was talking about prayer: "The freshness of my eyes (consolation) has been placed for me in prayer". In other words, "real peace of mind for me is in prayer". It shows that spiritual response which gives peace of mind to the worshipper originates from the Divine Being. The worshipper (*musalli*) is the recipient and the beneficiary of 'Divine Response.' (14)

Lastly, it may also be emphasised that man's excellence and advancement in the spiritual sense is

14. Corbin Henry, op.cit, pp.263-271.

in his humbleness and lowness before his Lord. The highest office or position to which man can rise, including the noblest of God's Messengers, is to be His servant ('*abd*'). Anyone who denies this fact cannot expect any Divine Response, except His Wrath and Condemnation like the accursed Satan. The more one feels humble and lowly in His Presence in prayer (or *dhikr*), the higher one rises in His Estimation of him and the nearer he comes to God. Thus the relationship of man with God increases as he makes himself lower and lower before Him.

When the worshipper seeks "His Guidance" and in response, he is granted "what he asks", he bows before Him (*rukū*) in gratitude and says, "Glory to my Lord, the Magnificent. (*Subhana Rabbi al-Azim*)". God comes closer to him and, in a state of extreme gratitude and thankfulness, he falls on the ground in prostration (*sajdah*) before his Lord and acknowledges His Majesty and Greatness in humility and says, "Glory be to my Lord, the Highest (*Subhana Rabbi al-'Ala*).". This is the lowest degree of humbleness in the physical world but is the highest state of a worshipper in the spiritual world. Man lies in prostration before His Sovereign Lord (*Sajdah*). Who lifts him up and bestows upon him all His Blessings and Favours of 'Divine Presence', 'Divine Audition' and 'Divine Vision' and raises him to the status of His servant ('*abd*'). This is the culminating point in the prayer of a worshipper when he attains Divine Communion.

In the words of Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, "In the whole of the prayer, *sajdah* marks the nearest point of communion with God. It is the most worthy and adorable act in His Sight. So beg earnestly of Him and supplicate to Him solemnly in it. " The devotee, thus, tries to make the most of this priceless moment and cries his heart out in the Presence of the Almighty. He, so to speak, says: " O Lord ; Thou

heareth what I say and seeth wherever I am and in whatever state. Thou knowest what is secret and what is manifest in me, and naught concerning me is concealed from Thee. I am in distress, a beggar. I beg Thee for protection and succour. Thy fear is gripping me. I confess my sins. I entreat Thee like a poor, helpless suppliant. I beseech Thee like an afflicted, awe-struck slave, a slave whose head may be bowed before Thee, whose tears may be flowing in Thy Presence, and whose body may be lying prostrate on the ground, begging and imploring and crying his heart out. O Lord; do not reject my prayer, have mercy on me. O Thou! The Best and Most Excellent of Givers and the Noblest of Helpers. This is the *Sajdah*, before which the mountains have quivered and the earth has shaken. The heads of powerful rulers and arrogant despots used to bend against its irresistible force. The all-conquering *sajdah* of intense love and devotion has, time and again, come to the rescue of the *millat* and lent it a helping hand in its crusading endeavours and religious expeditions. The history of Islam is studded with its glittering achievements". (15)

Pious men of learning regard prayer as a means of reaching the Divine Presence and, from beginning to end, a way to Divine Response. The state of prayer of a man is, in fact, an index to his relationship with God. The deeper the love for God, the greater and stronger is the desire to seek His Pleasure and His Presence, and prayer is the best means for it. Those people who love God always practise prayer in order to meet their Lord. In fact, Love of God is an essential part of Faith (*iman*). But those who believe are overflowing in their love for God" (2: 165). And the Holy Prophet said, "Whoever loves meeting God, God also loves meeting him and whoever dislikes meeting Him, He also dislikes meeting him".

15. *Four Pillars of Islam*, pp. 35-36.

As prayer is the effective means of meeting God, whenever the time of prayer came, the Holy Prophet used to call Bilal anxiously and ask him, "Bilal, provide me with peace and satisfaction through prayer (by making the call (*adhan*) to prayer)". (16)

Prayer is undoubtedly a means of meeting the Lord and whoever loves Him should practise prayer in order to meet Him and seek His Love: The Holy Prophet said, "Whenever God likes some one He says to Gabriel, "O Gabriel, I love that person so you also love him. Gabriel begins to love him and then announces in the heavens, "O Inhabitants of the heavens; God loves that person so you also love him. Then all inhabitants of the heavens begin to love him. Then gradually his popularity spreads to the earth and the inhabitants of the earth begin to love him". In short, prayer opens up vast horizons of spiritual advancement for the worshipper to which there is no end or limit. (17)

According to Shah Wali Ullah Dehlvi if anyone wants something from God, seeks His Assistance in trouble or hardship or wants to develop a close relationship with Him, he must completely absorb himself in acts and words of exaltation in order to increase the effect of his prayer. In fact, there are three things in prayer. (1) Humility in the Presence of the Majesty and Grandeur of God, (2) Willing acceptance of His Sublimity and one's lowness, and (3) Use of the proprieties in body postures in accordance with the condition of humility. Acts of reverence include standing in His Presence and glorifying Him; and even more than standing is veneration in this that, thinking of one's own humility and His Might and Magnificence, one should bow down

16. *Kashf al-Mahjoob*, pp. 308-312.

17. *Muatta*, Imam Malik, *Kit ab Ar-Risq*, quoted by *Shahib Kash al-Majoob*, pp. 313-314.

before Him. Traditionally, a stiff neck is considered as a sign of pride and greatness and bowing down is regarded as a sign of lowness and humbleness. God says, "If such were Our Will, We could send down to them from the sky a Sign, to which they would bend their necks in humility" (*Qur'an*:26-4). And still more reverence than this is to bow one's head, which is the noblest of limbs and the controller of all the senses, down on the earth before Him (in prostration).

These three forms of exaltation have been common among the people, who have always used them as a mark of reverence in the presence of their kings and nobles. The best form of prayer is that which includes all these three forms and in which there is progress from the lower form (or stage) of reverence to the higher one in order that the state of humbleness and lowness should seem to grow. The benefit which the worshipper gets from this form of prayer cannot be achieved in merely the higher form of reverence (*sajdah*), or in moving from the higher to the lower form of reverence. These three forms of acts in prayer are considered fundamental in attaining communion (*hadhur*) with God. Mere glorification of God (*dhikr Allah*) not followed or supported by other acts of reverence of the body are not very beneficial to people. Prayer, however, is a compound recipe, such as provides an opportunity to ponder over the Nature and Sublimity of the Creator and then through it to concentrate attention towards the Lord. Every one gets an opportunity in prayer to think and ponder with full concentration over his own state of humility and the Sublimity and Majesty of the Lord, which helps him to get closer to his Creator. Besides, there are various supplications which increase one's concentration and sincerity in prayer and show that one is totally devoted to Him and that one's entire attention is towards Him. All these factors together make the

usefulness of prayer equal for all the people. Now it is up to each individual to benefit from the prayer according to his ability, effort, attention, sincerity and perseverance. Prayer is a *mi'raj* (ascension to God and His Manifestations) for a believer and it prepares him for His Manifestations (*tajalliyat*). (18)

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself (*sajdah*), so make supplication often". Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "When a man recited (*Surah*) as *Sajdah*, the devil retires weeping and saying, "Woe to man! The son of Adam has been commanded to prostrate himself and has done so, and will be rewarded with Paradise, but I have been commanded to prostrate myself and have refused, so I will be punished with Hell". (19) The Holy Prophet told his Companions to suppress the ego and pride of their souls through prostrations (*sujud*). God describes the state of the dwellers of Hell: "What led you into Hell-Fire?" They will say: "We were not of those who prayed" (74:42-43). It is undoubtedly true that no action is more beneficial for knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of God than prayer. When one gets used to prayer and his desire and enthusiasm for prayer grows, he becomes absorbed in the dialogue with God and receives audition and vision from Him. In other words, he prays in His Presence, he hears His Answers and sees and experiences His Manifestations. (18)

The condition of such worshippers is described in an old narrative: "God said to Prophet Musa (Moses): "O Musa, when you want to remember Me, remember Me in such a way that your limbs tremble and you hold Me dear at the time of remembrance and at other

18. *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*, Urdu translation by Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq. Karachi, pp.136-137.

19. *Mishkat*, p.183 (*Muslim* transmitted it).

times of rest. When you remember Me, keep your tongue behind your mind. When you stand before Me, stand before Me with fearful mind like the humblest slave and speak with Me with the tongue of a truthful man". And God revealed to him: "Tell your disobedient followers to remember Me. I took oath upon Myself that I shall remember one who remembers Me". (20) Hazrat Abu Bakr used to stand in prayer just like a statue. Some pious men used to remain in *ruku* like a motionless stone, so much so that birds sat on their heads (thinking them broken trunks of trees or just a lovely rock). The Holy Prophet said, "Pray as if it is your last (farewell) prayer, having in mind fear and shame owing to defects in prayers and fear that your prayer may not be accepted and that it may be thrown in your face with your open and secret sins". (21)

'It is reported from the Holy Prophet that he said: "When a man stands in prayer, God lifts up the veil between Him and His servant and faces him. The Angels climb upon his shoulders and pray in horizon along with him and say 'Amen' along with his invocation. They spread virtues over his head from above the horizon. The doors of heaven are opened for the praying man and God takes pride before His Angels for him and the face of God comes before him (*Hudhur*). (21) And God also prays, along with His Angels, for the believers: "He it is who sends Blessings on you (prays for you) and also His Angels, that He may bring you out from the depths of darkness into Light" (*Qur'an* 33:43). God's chief and everlasting Blessing is that He gives His worshippers knowledge of and deep insight into the spiritual world, and helps them towards its attainment a vision of Divine Manifestations.

20. Gazzali's *Ihya Ulum-id-Din*, Book.1.p.174.

21. Gazzali's Book.1.pp.179-180.

To sum up, prayer is the key which opens up the gates of spiritual advancement to man and provides him with an opportunity to experience His Presence, Audition and Vision, according to his own ability and effort. It gives him a chance to talk directly to his Creator, to enter into 'dialogue' (*munajat*) with Him, and through it, to receive a new light and greater scope for his personality. In other words, it gives him almost a new personality which has a direct link with his Creator. (22)

22. Urdu Encyclopaedia of Islam (Urdu Da'ira Mu'arif-e-Islamia Punjab Univercity, vol.12., p.182.

ITMINAN (PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY)

Itminan means the peace and tranquillity which comes with *dhikr Allah*, and the most convenient and simplest way to this is prayer. You stand solemnly, bow and prostrate before the Creator and also recite a portion from the *Holy Book*, the best form of *dhikr Allah*. The word *dhikr* is often used in the *Holy Qur'an* for prayer. And, as the essence of prayer is *dhikr Allah*, sometimes the latter is used to convey the meaning of the former, so that an individual, while practising the form, may not lose sight of its spirit and merely get stuck to its form: "Guard strictly your (habit of) *salat* But when you are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you" (2:238-239). "Take great care of your prayers, especially of a prayer that has excellent qualities of *salat* and stand before Allah like devoted servants" (*Qur'an* 2:238).

After explaining the rules and regulations for achieving and maintaining social welfare in order to improve the quality of life for the members of the community, God has again emphasised the importance of prayer because it alone can give complete satisfaction and peace of mind (*itminan*) to individuals in the hustle and bustle of life. In the Battle of Ahzab, the Muslims were so engaged in repelling the invasion of their enemies that they could not offer the prayer *al-'asr* before sunset. Then the Holy Prophet said, "May Allah fill their graves with fire for depriving us of our *salat-i-wusta*. It seems that by this what the Holy Prophet meant was that they were responsible for the spiritual loss the Muslims had suffered by their inability to offer their *'asr* prayer in time and with peace of mind. Undoubtedly the peace and tranquillity which one attains in prayer is far more valuable for a believer than all

1. First see under 'Contentment' in this book.

the wealth and kingdoms of this earth. (2)

The word used is *qunata* (*qun'ut*) which means to be obedient, submissive and humble. God has commanded believers to safeguard their *salat al-wusta* and stand before their Lord in prayer with obedience, humility and devoutness. This physical state of the believers before their Lord will certainly help them to attain the mental state necessary for obtaining the Presence (*hadhur*) of God and thereby peace and satisfaction of the heart. Thus believers are provided with the means, easily available to everyone, to experience the Divine Presence in prayer and attain peace and tranquillity of the heart.

Prayer in fact, is a form of *dhikr Allah*. The Holy Messenger Musa (Moses) was commanded to establish prayer in order to remember Him (*dhikr Allah*). "Verily, I am Allah: There is no deity but I, so serve thou Me (only), and establish prayer for My *dhikr*" (20:14). Truly, the hearts of believers attain real and lasting peace only through the practice of prayer. They are restless and anxious for the Light of God to dawn upon their hearts and enlighten their dark souls and give them eternal peace. They seek this pleasant and noble state of the heart from their Lord through prayer and *dhikr Allah*: "Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction" (13:28).

The verse starts with a simple statement that the hearts of the believers find real peace in prayer and then states with authority and authenticity that, undoubtedly it is the remembrance of God that can give lasting peace and satisfaction to the heart. A true believer may acquire all the wealth, prosperity

2. *Tafheem* vol, 1. p. 174.

and power on the earth, but his heart will never feel real peace, it will always be missing something which it can receive only through prayer and remembrance of God. For it is prayer that provides an opportunity to human beings to come closer to their Lord and attain the highest and the noblest goal of their life-God's Pleasure (*ridhwan Allah*).

Undoubtedly God leads to Him those who seek peace only through His Sublime Attributes and remembrance of Him and not through miracles and supernatural events. People who do not adopt this way always ask for miracles and supernatural events and are, therefore, deprived of real peace of mind. On the other hand, true believers seek the prayers and supplications of God's Messenger as a means of peace of their heart and soul. "But among these Bedouins there are some who believe in Allah and the Last Day and regard what they spend in the way of Allah as a means of bringing themselves nearer to Allah and of seeking the Messenger's prayers for God's blessings; yes, this is indeed a means of bringing them nearer to Allah" (9:99). And again in the same *Surah*: "O Prophet, pray for blessings for them because your prayers will bring comfort for them, and God hears everything and knows everything" (9:103). Thus the prayer of God's Messenger is expected to bring the Blessings of God and comfort for the believers and also act as a means of bringing them closer to God.

It is indeed His Presence and His Favours that can give permanent peace and tranquillity to human hearts. They may wander around for ages in the valleys of darkness and oblivion, but they can never find lasting satisfaction except through *dhikr Allah* (prayer). And there is no doubt that ultimate success and lasting peace of mind is only for those who practise regular prayer: "To the righteous soul will be said: O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and

satisfaction; Come back thou to thy Lord-well pleased (thyself) and well-pleasing unto Him. Enter thou, then, among My servants! Yes, enter thou My Heaven" (89:27-30). "The righteous enter into their inheritance and receive their welcome with a title that suggests freedom from all pain, sorrow, doubts, struggle, disappointments, passion, and even further desire: at rest, in peace, in a state of complete satisfaction. In Muslim theology, this stage of the soul is the final stage of bliss. Good receives a warm welcome from the Lord of Goodness Himself. The climax of the whole drama is: "Enter My Heaven!" (3)

'*Nafs mutma'inna*' means one who has attained complete peace, tranquillity and composure of mind and heart. He is that man who has accepted God, the One God, his Lord, with all his heart without any shadow of doubt, and taken the religion of His Messenger as his way of life. Whatever Command is given by God and His Messenger, he accepts and obeys without question and from whatever thing they forbid him, he refrains from it, fully satisfied that it is not a good thing to do. In other words, he accepts and obeys all Commandments of God and his Messenger, satisfied that they are the way which will protect him from the impurities and evils of life. The same thing is expressed in *Surah Al-An'am*: "So (the fact is that) whomever God wills to guide aright, He makes his heart wide open to Islam, and whomever He wills to let go astray, He makes his heart narrow and squeezes it so tightly that (at the very idea of Islam) he begins to feel as if his soul were climbing up towards the sky. Thus God sets impurity (caused by their deviation from the way of Islam) over those who do not believe. This way is the Straight Way of your Lord, and We have made its signs quite clear for those who are amenable to

advice. There is abode of peace for them with their Lord, and He is their Protector because of their righteousness" (6:125-127).

Such people are promised an 'abode of peace', a place of perfect peace and happiness, where they will have no fear of clamity and misery but a complete state of tranquillity. Ibn 'Arabi' observes that this return of the 'fully satisfied and pacified soul' is to the manifested God, Who manifests Himself directly to the individual according to the capacity of that individual. This return of the individual to his beloved Lord is almost his 'return to his paradise'. Here he attains perfect peace and tranquillity in the company of his Beloved Lord.⁽⁴⁾

Righteousness and devotion which entitle a believer to such an ideal and heavenly bliss and tranquillity come through the practice of prayer: Abu Musa reported God's Messenger as saying, "He who observes the two cool times (morning and night) prayer will enter Paradise". The Holy Messenger once remarked, "When you are in anger (or in sorrow or grief) perform abulution and offer two *rakah* prayer; it will cool down your temper and you will find peace and satisfaction in it." (5) And once he said, "I like such and such things most but prayer is the coolness of my eyes." In other words, he meant that the real peace and satisfaction of his heart was in prayer. Abu Hurairah reported God's Messenger as saying, "If people knew what blessing lies in the call to prayer and in the first row, then they could do nothing but cast lots for it, they would do so; if they knew what blessing lies in going to prayer early, they would race to do it, and if they knew what blessing lies in the prayer after nightfall and in the morning prayer, they

4. Corbin Henry, op.cit, p.253.

5. *Muslim and Bukhari*.

would come to them even if they had to crawl to do so." (6)

He also reported God's Messenger as saying, "No prayer is more burdonsome to the hypocrites than the dawn and the evening prayers, but if they knew what blessing lies in them they would come to them even if they had to crawl to do so." Concerning God's words, "The recitation of the dawn is witnessed," Abu Hurairah quoted God's Messenger as saying, "The Angels of the night and the Angels of the day are present at it." (90) In short, all the blessings of Allah, whether satisfaction and happiness of the mind, or peace and tranquillity of the heart, are found in the institution of prayer. Who-soever, needs it, should try to seek it by practising regular prayr. The *Holy Qur'an* and the *sunnah* of the Holy Messenger give us a clear indication that real and lasting peace (*itminan*) of the heart lies in prayer.

6. *Mishkat*, vol.1. pp.127-128 (*Bukhari and Muslim transmitted it*).

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفِي النَّهَارِ وَزُلْفَا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ
إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

SECTION EIGHT

SUMMARY

THE LAST WORD

In Islamic terminology prayer (*salat*) refers to that particular form of worship (*ibadah*) which is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam. It is called prayer because its real meaning is reverence and this particular form of worship is made obligatory for God's reverence and exaltation. Ibn Athir has given two meanings of prayer. First, 'supplication', because supplication is a part of prayer. Second, 'reverence', for *salat* implies reverence for and exaltation of God.

Prayer is that obligatory duty of Islam which no sensible Muslim can ever neglect. It is obligatory on every adult person in full possession of his mental faculties. The first Commandment after *Tawhid* (unity) given to the Holy Prophet Muhammad was prayer. This is the duty which has been performed from the beginning of Islam and was formally made obligatory on the night of the *mi'raj* (ascension). On many occasions, the *Qur'an* has stressed its importance. The Holy Prophet was asked, "What deed is the best and most excellent?" He replied, "The prayer offered on time." (1)

There are many traditions of the Holy Prophet with regard to the excellence, sublimity and grandeur of prayer. It is reported by Abu Hurairah that God's Messenger said, "Tell me, if there were a canal at the door of one of you in which he washed five times daily, would any of his dirt remain?" When he received the reply that none of it would remain, he said, "That is like the five times of prayer by which God removes the sins of the believers. Just as the dirt of the body is washed away by bathing, likewise prayer removes the dirt and filth of the

soul" (*Bukhari and Muslim*). The importance of prayer can also be known by the warning in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* to those who neglect prayer. "When they will be asked: What led you to Hell Fire?, they will say: We were not of those who prayed". (*Qur'an* 74:42-43). There is also a tradition of the Holy Prophet: Who does not offer prayer has no share in Islam. There is so much emphasis on the five daily prayers that, according to the majority of *hadith*, this is the dividing line between *kufur* (disbelief) and Islam, and intentional (i.e., without any justifiable reason) loss of prayer leads to *kufur*.

Blessings of Prayer

According to An-Numan bin Bashir, God's Messenger said, Supplication is worship (*'ibadah*). And Anas reported God's Messenger as saying, "Supplication is the pith of worship (*'ibadah*)." (2) That is why prayer proves to be the means of peace and tranquillity for man in the midst of the hardships and troubles of the world. (*Qur'an* 2:45). And he comes out safely at the times of his trials, in spite of his natural weakness and disappointment with the blessing of prayer. (*Qur'an* 70:19-23).

Man gets spiritual pleasure and enjoyment from prayer. He thanks God for His Mercy and Favours which, by developing his inner self, lend purpose and meaning to it. Purposeful prayer diverts man's attention towards God and gives him a wonderful feeling of the Divine Presence (*hudhur*). The Holy Prophet has said, "There is no prayer without presence of mind", and that the prayer is a *mi'raj* (ascension) for the believers. In prayer, a believer enters into effective and meaningful dialogue with his Lord. Prayer also restrains man from shameful and unjust

1. *Urdu Encyclopaedia of Islam : Urdu Da'irah Mu'arif-e-Islamia*, Vol. 12., pp. 179-183.

2. *Mishkat*, vol. 1, p. 472 (Ahmad, Tirmizi, abu Daud, Nasai and Ibn Majah transmitted it).

deeds (*Qur'an* 29:45). It also purifies and cleanses man's body, mind and soul of all evils (*Qur'an* 87:14), but these benefits are derived only by those worshippers who observe all the conditions and proprieties of prayer; others, who do not observe all the conditions and formalities of prayer, do not experience its real effects and results.

Prayer, in fact, is a central form of worship and is not merely action of the various parts of the body, but affects the whole body in totality. It is a spiritual state which absorbs and involves the total personality of the worshipper, so much so that every action of life, whether belonging to faith, worship or business relations with other people, is diverted to healthy channels. It is like the modern central heating system, which automatically warms up the whole building by providing heat from the centre. Similarly, if prayer is offered rightly, the whole body and soul is affected by it, and goodness and piety automatically flows from it. When a prayer does not represent the state of the central point (i.e., the soul and the total personality) and is action merely of the parts of the body, this comprehensive effect is not possible, even through such a prayer is, after all, an act through which we can still advance towards the establishment of prayer (*iqam-as-salat*) and benefit from it.

Prayer is like a watchdog in the inner self of a man and can serve as a check against evil, provided it is observed with all its conditions and proprieties. In certain circumstances, it is not properly completed because the worshipper observes it as a matter of habit or regards it merely as an act of the body and sufficient in itself, irrespective of its effects and results. The *Qur'an* warns worshippers who do not fulfil the conditions of *iqamat* (107:4-7 and 4:142). In this respect, non-fulfilment

of the conditions of *iqamat* lead to annulment of the prayer. Likewise if anyone's prayer is not stopping him from indecent and unjust actions, it is because he is not observing it properly.

Man is not obliging God by offering prayer but, on the other hand, he is under obligation through prayer and thereby he gains enlightenment and development of personality. It is a sign of piety (*taqwa*) and, at the same time, recognition of one's humility and lowness. Through prayer, man seeks himself, strengthens his personality and gets courage to fulfil his many duties. This is the wisdom of the repetition of *Surah Fatiha*, in which man tries to invite and initiate Divine Response and Divine Dialogue for his strength.

Another object of prayer is to develop a taste for cleanliness and purity. Ablution, including cleaning of the hands, face, nose, eyes, ears and feet, is a part of prayer and there is no real prayer without it. And prayer in congregation is a form of social discipline among clean people. This is also the reason behind the fixed timing of prayer because otherwise no social discipline of prayer could be organised. Then prayer has many moral, social and cultural benefits. All the improvements that came into the behaviour, manners and cultural and social life of the Muslims were mostly due to the institution of prayer. It was because of this that Islam took Bedouins, savage and uncultured people, who did not even know how to dress and eat properly, to the heights of culture and civilisation in a few years.

One of the first benefits of the prayer is that it promotes proper and decent dress for men and women since this is a requirement of the prayer. And the greatest benefit of prayer is that it has brought man very near to his Lord. He can, whenever he wishes,

without leaving his routine of life, come for a few minutes for prayer and go straight, without any formalities or protocol, into dialogue with his Lord, open up his heart before Him, present his needs, and experience the ecstasies of wonder, mystery and love which can lift him far above the earthly hustle and bustle and worries of life and give him perfect peace and tranquillity of the heart.

PRAYER HOT LINE BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

People have lost peace of mind through over indulgence in pleasures and neglect of their celestial and spiritual needs . A philosophy of life which can bring proper coordination and understanding between the physical and spiritual needs of man could solve many of the problems that face him today. Man has lost his relationship with God and is now wandering around in the wilderness of abstract thinking in search of peace. He can regain his peace of mind through re-establishing his link with God. And the shortest route to renew his relationship is to open dialogue with Him through prayer.

Prayer is a wonderful gift of God. There is no need to adopt different forms of self-annihilation to search for salvation. Prayer provides all the essential requisites for preparing the mind and transforming it into an extraordinary state capable of receiving the Divine Light . It provides physical as well as mental exercise in such a balanced way that neither is ignored or over-emphasised.

To sum up, prayer is the key which opens the gate of the kingdom of God— creative prayer becomes a dialogue between man and God and provides an opportunity to the earthly creature to open up his heart before his Creator.